THE ROSES OF GRACE: THE APPARITIONS OF MARY MEDIATRIX OF ALL GRACE IN LIPA CARMEL IN 1948

Rafael M. Villongco

On November 12, 2009, a major development in the history of Marian apparitions occurred. Archbishop Ramon C. Arguelles of Lipa issued an official decree overturning the negative verdict on the apparitions of the Blessed Virgin Mary at the Discalced Carmelite Monastery in Lipa, Batangas province, 1948.

If the Lipa apparitions will be declared of supernatural character, Lipa may join the ranks of the other approved major apparitions such as Guadalupe, La Salette, Lourdes, Fatima, Pontmain, Beauraing and Banneux, as well as the more recent Akita, Betania, Cuapa, Amsterdam, and Kibeho.

Archbishop Ramon Arguelles, declared that, "all bans written and unwritten to curtail or diminish the devotion to Mary, Mediatrix of All Grace be lifted." He then formed a new theological commission to conduct a thorough investigation and review all documents regarding the apparitions.

The Visionary

Teresita L Castillo was born into a prominent and affluent family from Tanauan, Batangas. Her father, Modesto Castillo was the governor of the province. She was raised and educated in convent schools. Teresita or "Teresing" as she is affectionately called, had nurtured a vocation to become a Discalced Carmelite. On her 21st birthday on July 4, 1948, she fled her home to enter the Carmel in Lipa. When her family found out, they tried to dissuade her with threats. But despite all the pressures, Teresita prevailed in following her call to become a Carmelite nun.

Diabolic Oppression

Within a few weeks after her entrance to Lipa Carmel, on the evening of July 31, 1948, Satan appeared to Teresita in her cell and attempted to evict her from the monastery. She rejected the devil but he was very persistent and soon the diabolical harassment was about to escalate. Teresita described the devil as being 'surrounded by fire' all over his body.

The First Apparition of the Blessed Virgin in Teresita's Cell

On August 18, 1948, Teresita noticed a very heavenly fragrance, and upon entering her room she saw a very beautiful Lady in white who spoke to her: "Do not fear my daughter, He who loves above all things has sent me. I come with a message…"

Then, the Lady asked Sister Teresita to wash the feet of the Mother Prioress, to kiss it and drink the water afterwards. Initially, Mother Cecilia, the Prioress, was skeptical of Teresita's claim until the Lady sent on Teresita's person a sign. Mother Cecilia saw tears of blood on the eyes of Teresita. The Mother Prioress then believed in Teresita's story about the apparition. Both of them followed the Lady's very unusual request for the washing of the feet. The Lady said that the washing was a "sign of humility and obedience" and a way to thwart the plans of the adversary.

The visionary, Teresita was astonished by the rapid succession of supernatural events surrounding her. It is said that Teresita inquired: "What is this? Is life really like this in Carmel?"

The Fifteen Apparitions at the Cloister Garden and the Messages

On Sunday afternoon, September 12, 1948, the Feast of the Holy Name of Mary, Teresita, while taking a walk at the cloister garden, was amazed when saw a vine shaking violently although there was no wind. She approached the vine and heard the Lady's voice telling her: "Do not fear, my child. Kiss the ground and whatever I shall tell you to do, you must do. Eat some grass, my child."

Teresita followed the Lady's request to eat some grass. The same had been asked of Saint Bernadette Soubirous at Lourdes in 1858. "I wish that you come here to visit me on this spot for fifteen consecutive days be it rain or shine." Teresita didn't see the Lady but she only heard her voice.

On September 13 at five o' clock in the afternoon, Teresita returned at the garden, she knelt and prayed the "Hail Mary". Upon saying the words "full of grace" she saw the vine moving and then see saw the most beautiful Lady with her hands clasped in prayer holding a golden Rosary on her right hand. The Lady was clothed with an immaculate white gown and a narrow belt. She was barefoot and

her feet were resting on a cloud floating about two to three feet above the ground. The Lady was very beautiful beyond words.

The Lady said, “Please pray for priests and nuns and help me by making penance for them. Pray for them as you have never prayed before. The Sacred Heart of My Son bleeds anew for every fallen priest or nun. To some, pride was the obstacle to return to the true fold and shame hardened their hearts."

Teresita asked the Lady: "Who are you?" The Lady replied: "I am your Mother and am the Mother of my Son, Jesus."

The next day at the same time, Teresita went to the same place at the vine and she found the Lady already waiting for her, with her arms outstretched as if she ready to embrace Teresita.

"I wish this place to be blessed tomorrow" the Lady requested. Teresita asked: "At what time, my dear Lady?" The Lady replied: "At anytime your Mother Prioress wants. My child, I forbid you to forget the incidents of these fifteen days." The Lady gave her maternal blessing to Teresita and then vanished.

The blessing of the garden took place at three o 'clock in the afternoon of September 15. The Chaplain of Carmel, Bishop Alfredo Maria Obviar, officiated the ritual. The Lady appeared again to Teresita but was only visible to her. She outstretched her arms as if to gather everyone present in her maternal embrace.

The Lady asked Teresita to get a sheet of paper and pencil to write her message: "My daughters: I ask you to believe in me and to keep this as a secret among yourselves for the time being. Love one another as true sisters. Come and visit me here often. Love your Mother Prioress very much. Make this spot holy and venerate the grounds. I wish this monastery be known as Our Lady's Carmel."

It was after that apparition and the blessing by Bishop Obviar that the nuns witnessed for the first time, the sudden and mysterious appearance of rose petals. The shower of rose petals was the sign which Bishop Obviar prayed for in order to prove the authenticity of Teresita's visions.

Teresita returned to the vine at about five in the afternoon and the Lady gave another message: "I ask this from Carmel: I wish that my image be place here on this spot. This place must be cleaned so that it may become a shrine for prayer."

On September 16, the Lady appeared to Teresita accompanied by little angels or cherubims. The Lady with a very sad countenance came with this message: "Little one, two of my daughters refuse to believe me. They dislike like you also." Then the Lady continued: "I wish a statue of myself to be made so that my little ones can see. Describe me to your Chaplain. I wish my statue to look as you see me and as big as that of Our Lady of Lourdes which stands in the cloister."

There was also a message given for a sister who did not believe in the apparitions: "To my daughter who does not believe me, I do not oblige you to believe. But do not block nor debase my sacred place nor despise my words…"

On September 24, the Lady asked the Carmelite community for a Total Consecration to the Blessed Virgin Mary according to the spirituality of Saint Louis Grignion de Montfort from his treatise, "True Devotion to Mary."

Sunday, September 26 was the last of the fifteen days of Teresita's encounter with the Lady at the vine. The Lady said to her: "Do not forget that My Son is the Way, the Truth and the Life… My child, you must love and obey your Mother Prioress. Tell the sisters to love one another and to practice the virtues of humility and simplicity which I love most. Tell them to love and obey their superiors and not to forget that things I ask. Do not forget to consecrate yourself to me on October."

The Lady finally identified herself: "I am Mary, Mediatrix of All Grace. I shall bless the community morning and evening." Blessing the novice, the Lady disappeared.

Teresita Suffers the Passion of Christ and had other Mystical Experiences

On Friday, November 5, the Sisters witnessed Teresita suffer the Passion of Our Lord. At noon, Teresita lost consciousness and has outstretched arms as if being crucified, her feet taking the same position as Jesus on the cross. She suffered the three-hour agony of Jesus. The Seven Last Words were reenacted through Teresita. At exactly three o'clock, the exact time commemorating the death of Christ, Teresita bowed her head--the sisters thought she really died.

It is also reported that Teresita had other mystical experiences such as receiving Holy Communion from an angel on occasions when she was unable to attend Holy Mass because she was sick in bed. She had visions of the Sacred Heart,

of many angels and saints including Saint Cecilia and Saint Therese of the Child Jesus.

Teresita also claimed to have received secrets from the Blessed Virgin. She said that there was one for herself, one for the Carmelite community of Lipa, one for the world, and one for China. Mother Cecilia on the other hand was said to be a recipient of 'interior locutions' or an inner voice telling her to assist Teresita during her sufferings.

The Final Apparition of Our Lady in Lipa Carmel

The Lady appeared for the last time at the vine and gave her most important message to Teresita and for the whole world: "Pray my child. The people do not listen to my words. Tell my daughters that there will be persecutions, unrest and bloodshed in your country. The enemy of the Church will try to destroy the Faith which Jesus had established and died for. The Church will suffer much. Pray for the conversion of sinners throughout the world. Pray for those who rejected me and those who do not believe my messages in the different parts of the world. I am really sad but consoled by those who believe and trust me. Spread the meaning of the Rosary because this will be the instrument for peace throughout the world. Tell my people that the Rosary must be prayed with devotion. Spread the devotion to My Immaculate Heart. Do penance for priests and nuns. But do not be afraid, for the love of My Son will soften the hardest of hearts and my motherly love will be their strength to crush the enemies of God. What I ask here is the same I asked at Fatima. I bless this community in a very special way. All these can be revealed now. I repeat to you that I am Mary, Mediatrix of All Grace. This is my last apparition on this place." The Lady ascended to the clouds and vanished.

The Shower of Rose Petals Continues

A few days later after the final apparition of Mary, Mediatrix of All Grace, the incredible phenomenon of the shower of rose petals started to occur outside the monastery. Hundreds and then, thousands of people started to flock to Lipa Carmel to witness the rain of roses from heaven.

The Bishop of Lipa, Monsignor Alfredo Verzosa was furious about the new phenomenon and so, he ordered a halt to the public veneration of the statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mediatrix of All Grace. On November 19, he rushed to visit

the sisters in order to put an end to the events at Carmel. When he was about to enter the door; he was stunned when he was greeted by the shower of rose petals. Since then, he had a change of heart. He allowed the image of the Mediatrix to be displayed again at the glass window for veneration by the faithful. He also gave permission for the release of the official account.

The pilgrims who flocked to Lipa Carmel with the hopes of witnessing a petal shower increased in great numbers as months passed. The public's fascination towards Lipa was overwhelming. Almost every day, news coverage about the apparitions and the rose petal showers were a daily staple in the various national and international media. It is reported that on November 11, 1949, the First Lady of the Commonwealth at that time, Mrs. Aurora Quezon, and her entourage went on pilgrimage to Carmel and witnessed the phenomenon of the rose petal showers. Bishop Alfredo Obviar testified that he also witnessed the miracle of the roses.

The Miracles and Healings

Many miraculous cures and conversions were reported by the use of the rose petals from Lipa. The blind were restored to sight and the sick were healed. The most publicized was the cure of a one-year old baby named Maria Socorro Mendoza Dichoso who was born with a soft head and had a hole on her skull.

When her mother went on pilgrimage to Lipa Carmel, she was given a rose petal by the nuns. Socorro's mother made a novena to Our Lady, Mediatrix of All Grace and then applied the petal on the child's head. The hole on the baby's skull suddenly disappeared and the brain receded. This healing was confirmed by x-rays.

One outstanding cure was that of Melania Maria Sunga of Candon, Ilocos Sur who was a 9 year old child then suffering from 'club foot'. Her foot was so deformed that it was wasted away to almost skin and bones. She made her way to school by limping and jumping. In 1949, her uncle who was a seminarian during the Lipa apparitions, now Bishop Edmundo Abaya, gave her mother a bottle of water that was placed overnight beside the statue of the Mediatrix of All Grace. Melania's mother also made a novena to the Blessed Virgin and then applied the Lipa water.

One morning, Melania walked around the house and to the amazement of her family, her club foot had straightened out. This caused excitement among the family and neighbors. Neighbors remarked when they noticed a strong fragrance of

roses around the Sunga residence. Meanwhile, the Sunga family was amazed when they witnessed a shower of rose petals right in their own home.

The statue of Mary, Mediatrix of All Grace also became the focus of attention after some time: pilgrims reported to witness the statue coming to life and moving in its glass case. The eyes of the Virgin's statue were raised and seen gazing afar. The pilgrims also witnessed the rosary moving, as if the statue was fingering the rosary.

The Carmel Chapel

On January 23, 1949, the cornerstone was laid for the future Church of Our Lady, Mary Mediatrix of All Grace, officiated by Bishop Alfredo Obviar. About thirty to fifty thousand pilgrims were present for the event. The Church was completed within two years and was funded entirely by donations of the pilgrims.

The Persecutions

Soon the events at Lipa were abused by some, especially through commercialization: fake rose petals were sold and issued to pilgrims. The Carmel of Lipa suffered a series of trials one after another. On January 23, 1950 Bishop, Verzosa was suddenly transferred without prior notice from Lipa and virtually all episcopal power was handed over to an Apostolic Administrator.

After that, Mother Mary Cecilia of Jesus, was ordered to leave Lipa Carmel and was replaced with a new mother prioress. Bishop Obviar was also relieved of his duties as Auxiliary Bishop of Lipa. Soon, people and the media started to accuse to accuse the nuns of 'orchestrating' the petal showers with the use of a blower and also of enriching themselves.

Teresita was interrogated by psychologist, Father Angelo Blas, O.P. a Dominican priest from the University of Santo Tomas in Manila. He was reported to have attempted to have her renounce the apparitions. She refused to do so. A psychiatrist, Dr. Pardo reportedly intimidated the visionary to make her admit that she was insane and was just seeking attention. There were also reports that they forced Teresita to so sign a false document but she refused. However, a final report by Father Blas stated: "Teresita Castillo is perfectly normal and not suffering from hallucinations or other mental disorder."

The Negative Verdict and the Suppression

The official investigation concluded that "events at Lipa Carmel including the rose petal showers exclude any supernatural invention." The signatories were; Archbishop Gabriel Reyes of Manila, Bishop Cesar M. Guerrero of San Fernando, Bishop Mariano Madriaga of Lingayen, Bishop Rufino Santos- Administrator of Lipa, Bishop Vicente Reyes-Auxiliary Bishop of Manila and Bishop Juan Sison,- Auxilary Bishop of Nueva Segovia. The document was also signed by the Apostolic Nuncio, Archbishop Egidio Vagnozzi.

Several years later, these same bishops who signed the negative report on the events of Lipa Carmel would later confess on their deathbeds that they were coerced to sign a negative verdict against their own free will under pain of excommunication. A thorough investigation appeared to be lacking. Neither Bishop Obviar nor Bishop Verzosa were interviewed by the commission to investigate the apparitions. It is interesting to note that the bishops responsible for the negative verdict on Lipa, kept their rose petals given to them by the nuns.

After the Church's decision was issued; the nuns were ordered to destroy all materials connected to the apparitions. They burned Teresita's diary as well as Mother Mary Cecilia's. The image of Our Lady was also ordered destroyed but the nuns didn't have the strength to do so; they devised means to save it. All who were directly involved in the apparitions were made to suffer. Very strict sanctions were imposed on the Carmelite community at Lipa. The doors of the monastery were closed, not only to applicants to the religious life but also from the outside world. The nuns were even forbidden to see members of their own families. For a long time, Sister Elizabeth, an out sister, single-handedly supported the community through begging. She was the only nun permitted to look after the physical needs of the community.

Teresita on the other hand, left Carmel never to return due to the advice of the new (French) Mother Prioress, Ma Mere, who replaced Mother Mary Cecilia of Jesus. She tearfully advised Teresita to leave the monastery on her own volition so that it would enable her to reenter Carmel whenever she would be ready. She was not admitted for profession of vows because she lacked a full year of residency in the convent. This was however due to her trips to Manila for inquiries into the apparitions.

The Lipa apparitions were suppressed for 40 years but the devotees of Mary Mediatrix believed in silence and were obedient to the Church. They were steadfast in their faith that one day, the case would be reopened and the apparitions declared authentic.

The Revival

In the early 1990's, through the effective investigative reporting of broadcast journalist, June Keithley- Castro, the case on Lipa was reopened. Her report pointed to a less thorough, incomplete and rushed investigation by the bishops who signed the negative verdict which consigned Lipa into oblivion. Since the appearance of her documentary and book on "Lipa", devotion to the Mediatrix has revived and people started to make their way on pilgrimages to Lipa Carmel.

Sometime in February, 1990 a new unusual phenomenon was reported in the Granja District of Lipa City. A white luminous silhouette of Our Lady began allegedly to appear every evening on the leaves of a tall coconut tree. The image was visible for 90 consecutive nights. Then on May 21, 1990, Sr. Alphonse, who witnessed Teresing's blindness pleaded on her deathbed that the statue of Our Lady, Mary Mediatrix of All Grace be exposed again for public veneration at the Chapel of the Carmelite Monastery. Her request was granted the very next day.

On January 24, 1991, the shower of rose petals from the sky was reported again in Lipa Carmel. A few days later, a group of six children were playing in the front garden of the Carmel monastery when they saw the statue of Our Lady of Mount Carmel come to life and shed tears.

The late Archbishop Mariano Gaviola gave permission to display again the statue of Mary Mediatrix of All Grace. In March 1993, in the presence of thousands of pilgrims at Carmel, he declared his personal conviction that the Lipa events were "worthy of belief". Since then, pilgrims have flocked to Lipa and every September, the date of the first apparition, became a National Day of Prayer and Consecration.

The Lifting of the Ban

There were more developments that happened when Archbishop Ramon Arguelles took over the Archdiocese of Lipa in 2004. Before an International

Mariological Conference held in Lourdes, France on September 2008, Archbishop Arguelles stated bluntly: "Yes, Mary Mediatrix of All Grace did appear in Lipa."

On November 12, 2009, the anniversary of the last apparition of Mary Mediatrix, Archbishop Arguelles took a big step forward in resolving the issue on the Marian apparitions at Lipa. He issued a decree stating that "all bans written or unwritten to curtail or diminish the devotion to Mary, Mediatrix of All Grace be lifted." He also formed a theological commission to review the documents related to the events of Lipa in 1948.

Archbishop Ramon Arguelles further stated: "I believe that the Mediatrix phenomenon is the most significant event in the local Church of Lipa in the last one hundred years. Undeniably, the Blessed Virgin Mary is extremely active during the last decades. If she had indeed shown her presence and delivered her message in various places throughout the world even in some nations in Asia, how can this 'pueblo amante de Maria" be different and excluded from her powerful intervention?"

The devotees of Mary, Mediatrix of All Grace are now eagerly waiting for the official findings of the new commission and the final pronouncement of the Archdiocese of Lipa on the apparitions.

THE APPARITIONS OF OUR LADY OF LIPA: MAKING HEADWAY

Lourdes Policarpio

Among the apparitions of Our Lady in the last hundred years or so, while it is the Amsterdam apparitions that should merit a great deal of attention because of the supposed request for the fifth Marian dogma, allied to it are the apparitions of Our Lady of Lipa (Province of Batangas Philippines) where she calls herself, Mediatrix of All Grace. In both, Amsterdam and the Philippines, she is the Mediatrix, the channel for God's graces to mankind. While the apparitions in Amsterdam however have enjoyed the approval of the local Bishop, those in Lipa have had a tragic history.

Way back in 1948, the cloistered Carmelite convent in Lipa became a hub of pilgrims and the plain curious when it was reported that a young postulant, Teresita Castillo, just two months after joining the Sisters, was having apparitions of the Blessed Mother. What made things sensational was that showers of petals became an occurrence in the convent grounds, prompting Filipinos from all over to flock to the convent in the hope of catching a petal which reportedly bestowed favors and cures.

The excitement regarding Our Lady of Lipa was short-lived as, three years after, on 11 April 1951, a Church verdict came out stating that there was no supernatural intervention in the extraordinary events at Lipa, Carmel. Consequently, the distribution of rose petals was stopped and the statue of Mary, Mediatrix of All Grace was kept from public veneration.

The devotion to Our Lady of Lipa, under the title Mary Mediatrix, however did not fade with the years, despite the negative pronouncement of the Church. In 1991, after long years of silent agony and suppressed fervor, then Lipa Archbishop Mariano Gaviola allowed the image to be taken out and exposed to the public in the Carmelite chapel. Since then, pilgrims have thronged to Lipa and September 12, the date of the first apparition, became a National Day of Prayer, Reparation and Consecration.

As Archbishop Ramon Arguelles subsequently took over the reins of the Archdiocese, things perked up even more. Before an International Mariological Congress in Lourdes, France last September 2008, Bishop Arguelles stated bluntly: *"Yes, Mary, Mediatrix of All Grace, did appear in Lipa."* However, due to unfortunate historical circumstances, he was still vacillating in making a clear-cut pronouncement.

In November 2009 however, Bishop Arguelles took a step forward in resolving the alleged apparitions of Our Lady of Lipa. He came out with a Decree stating that *"all bans written or unwritten to curtail or diminish the devotion to Mary Mediatrix of All Grace be lifted"* and quite significantly, he formed a new commission to review the documents on the alleged apparitions.

In the November 2009 issue of *"Ulat Batangan,"* official newspaper of the Archdiocese of Lipa, Bishop Arguelles wrote in his column:

Increasingly many concur with me that most likely the most significant event in the local Church of Lipa all these hundred years is the supposed visit of the Blessed Virgin Mary in 1948. Undeniably the Blessed Virgin Mary is extremely active during the last decades. If she had indeed shown her presence and delivered her message in various places throughout the world even in some nations in Asia, how can this "pueblo amante de Maria" be different and excluded from her powerful intervention?

It should also be noted that the Archdiocese is celebrating its centennial from 10 April 2010 to 10 April 2011. Pilgrims should flock there more than ever as Pope Benedict XVI has declared 21 churches in the Archdiocese as Jubilee churches endowing them with the privilege of granting plenary indulgence (subject to the usual conditions of Sacrament of Reconciliation, Eucharistic Communion and prayer for the intentions of the Holy Father).

We watch and pray. What is unfolding before our eyes is an important milestone in Marian history. We pray that the Holy Spirit guide Archbishop Arguelles in momentous decisions he has to make regarding the alleged apparitions of Our Lady of Lipa. In prayer and in spirit, we join all Batangueños and storm the Heavens with blessings for the Philippines, through the intercession of Mary Mediatrix of All Grace

LIPA BISHOP LIFTS BAN ON "OUR LADY"

Marrah Erika Lesaba

Lipa Archbishop Ramon Arguelles confirmed that he had lifted the 1951 ban on the public veneration of Our Lady, Mediatrix of All Grace.

In a phone interview Tuesday night, Arguelles said he lifted the ban on Nov. 12 as "there was nothing wrong in praising apparitions" as he was well-aware of "the love of the people for the Blessed Mother."

"The Blessed Mother has [protected] the country from calamities," he said. In 1948, the Virgin Mary allegedly appeared 19 times to Teresita Castillo, a novice in the Carmelite Order in Lipa City. Rose petals with holy images reportedly fell from the sky. In her last apparition to Castillo, the Blessed Virgin identified herself: "I am the Mediatrix of All Grace." Although the veneration of Our Lady, Mediatrix of All Grace was permitted by then Bishop Alfred Verzosa, the Philippine church hierarchy declared in 1951 that "there was no supernatural intervention in the reported extraordinary happenings including the shower of rose petals in Lipa," according to the website www.marymediatrixofallgrace.com.

Withdrawn from the public

The website www.miraclehunter.com chronicles the events following the church decision: "Bishop [Verzosa] and Mother Prioress were released of their jobs. The nuns were ordered to destroy all materials connected with the apparitions. They burned [Castillo's] diary, as well as the Mother Prioress'. The statue [of the Virgin Mary] was also ordered destroyed, but the nuns … saved it from destruction. The convent was sealed, and the nuns could talk to no one outside of the convent." Bishop Rufino Santos, who became apostolic administrator after Verzosa, ordered that "no petals be given to anyone by the Lipa Carmelite community and the statue of Our Lady of Mediatrix be withdrawn from public view," the website said.

Despite the passing of the years and the suppression, the Carmelite nuns of Lipa as well as the Marian devotees who believe in the apparitions, remained hopeful that one day, the case would be reopened and the apparitions declared authentic. Many continued to believe and would go to the Carmelite monastery in Lipa to pray especially in the '50s.

Image displayed again

In 1992, Archbishop Mariano Gaviola granted permission to once again display the image of Our Lady, Mediatrix of All Grace. In 1993, he declared his personal conviction that the Lipa apparitions were worthy of belief, according to www.miraclehunter.com. As the years went by, the ban seemed to have been disregarded as new proofs of the apparitions' authenticity were presented and accounts about the bishops' high-handed suppressiveness in 1948 were brought to light.

A repeat of the shower of rose petals is said to have occurred some years ago but the Carmelite nuns kept a low profile. Some people have petals in their possession.

In 2005, Arguelles resurrected the veneration for Our Lady, Mediatrix of All Grace with "increased activity and devotion" and plans to place statues representing the Virgin of Lipa, in every diocese, according to www.miraclehunter.com.

Official lifting of ban

When Arguelles declared the official lifting of the 1951 ban on Nov. 12, it was the 61st anniversary of the last of the series of apparitions to Castillo which occurred from September to November in 1948. Arguelles stressed: "My order on Nov. 12 was merely a 'relifting' of Gaviola's order." He also said that last month, he went to Rome to ask permission to search the archives for documents pertaining to the controversial apparitions but no such documents were found. The Lipa Archbishop said that at 3 p.m. every 12th day of the month, the rosary is prayed by devotees from different towns in Batangas and from all over the country.

Novena

The devotion to Our Lady, Mediatrix of All Grace is acknowledged in all parishes in Laguna, said Fr. Romi Ponte, parish priest of San Gabriel in San Pablo City. "In our parish, we have a huge picture of the Vigin Mary to whom devotees offer prayers and novenas," he told the Inquirer in a phone interview Tuesday night. The veneration of Our Lady has been promoted all over the country for more than a year now with a literature on the novena sold in Catholic bookstores, Ponte said.

CHINA'S INTENTIONS FOR THE PHILIPPINES WERE PROPHESIED IN LIPA

Bobit S. Avila

The colored photos of China's expansion on "Mischief Reef" which was shown in the front page of The Philippine STAR is clear and visible proof that China intends to stay in this reef regardless of what we Filipinos think about this problem. Perhaps now is the time to ask ourselves, what really are the plans of China for the Philippines? Are they merely contented with staying in a miniscule Mischief Reef or are we seeing some kind of a bigger, albeit a more sinister plan to take over the Philippines?

I'm sure that a lot of Filipinos believe that China would never dare invade the Philippines. Well, I already pointed out a few columns ago that these are the same thoughts of some Filipinos 71 years ago when they were asked whether Japan would invade the Philippines or not. In those days, the Philippines was still a Commonwealth nation under the United States, hence few people entertained the idea of Japan invading the Philippines because it would provoke a war with the United States. The bombing of Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7 proved all those skeptics wrong.

Today Filipinos are wondering what really is the intention of China? In case people already forgot, China's intentions for the Philippines was already prophesied 63 years ago. Yes, on Oct. 17, 1949, the Blessed Virgin Mary appeared before Sister Teresita "Teresing" Castillo at the San Sebastian Cathedral in Lipa City, Batangas. I'm not inventing this, you can read it in a pamphlet entitled "I am Mary, Mediatrix of All Grace" by Teresita L. Castillo. But only people with a strong faith believe this as true.

So what did our Mama Mary say about China on Oct. 17, 1949? She said, "Pray hard for China's dream to invade the whole world. The Philippines is one of its favorites. Money is the evil force that will lead the people of the world to destruction. Prayers, sacrifices self-denials and the daily recitation of the Holy Rosary will soften the heart of my Son as I said before." If you want to verify whether this is true or not, please call Archbishop of Lipa Ramon Argüelles and he will even tell you that there's more to this!

Notice that the Blessed Virgin Mary made this prophecy 16 days after the Oct. 1, 1949 victory of Chairman Mao Zedong against the Chinese Nationalists under Chiang Kai Shek. If you want more information on China's intentions, there is a book entitled "China's Plan to Dominate Asia and the World: Hegemon" written by Steven W. Mosher and published in the year 2000 by Encounter Books. You can also check it out on YouTube as I have already seen a video of the author talking about China's intentions, which includes the Philippines and most of Asia. Small wonder, China has always had good relations with North Korea, its bulldog that it holds on a very short leash to growl at the United States every now and then.

I recently spoke in two Marian Congresses one held last July 14 at the Sacred Heart Center and the other was held only last Aug. 25 in Davao City at the CAP Center talking on the topic "Living in the Era of Chastisement: from Fatima to Lipa" and my audience have asked me to write about the message of our Lady of Mediatrix of All Graces that happened in Lipa.

THE VISIONARY OF THE LIPA APPARITIONS

Lourdes Policarpio

Furthermore to be living in the same community, I have observed Teresing Castillo with a mixture of human curiosity and admiration. Admiration because for a person to have come out of such a great trial with dignity and integrity intact, that really says something of her character. Teresing usually goes to daily morning Masses dressed in white. This woman of 70 years has an extraordinary path.

A Different Path

Teresing was 21 when she fled her home to join the contemlative community of the Carmelite Sisters in Lipa, Batangas. Coming from a prominent and well-to-do clan, her father had served as governor of Batangas. Teresing was studying to be a pianist and as a graduation present, her parents had intended to give her an expensive grand piano from Germany.

But becoming a concert pianist as a piano teacher was not Teresing's real dream. At an early age, she had secretly nurtured a desire to be a religious. Mustering courage, she escaped from her home on her 21st birthday and ran to the Carmelite sisters. Shocked and bewildered, her family members followed her to the convent and one of the brothers even brandished a gun and threatened the sisters to let Teresing out. But if this was God's way of testing Teresing's determination, Teresing passed with flying colors because she stood her ground and refused to leave the convent.

But the new postulant would walk a path different from the usual one traced by the Carmelite Sisters. Barely a month after her extraordinary arrival in the convent, she was again caught up in extraordianry events, Our Lady came – and so did the devil. In Carmel, Teresing says she saw Our Lady more than 15 times.

Years before, I had asked her: "Did you see her(Our Lady) the way you see me now?" She answered, "Oo, para siyang "full of light". Ako naman natakot. I asked to kiss the tip of her toe. Sabi ng mga Sisters "Bakit Ganyan lang?". ang feeling ko , yung full of reverence towards her." [Yes, it was like she was full of light. I was afraid. I asked to kiss the ti of her toes. The Sisters said, "Why just that?" But I felt full of reverence towards her."]

Life after Lipa Carmel

Interviewing her recently for this section on Lipa, I wanted to focus on what happened to her after the Church verdict issued in 1951 regarding the apparitions. Three years later after she entered the convent life in 1948, Teresing was asked because, as she was told, she had not completed the residency required of a novicce due to frequent interrogations of the comission at the University of Santo Tomas. She was told that she could come back later. However, poor health hindered her return. Hence, Teresing stayed with her parents and for two years was "inconsolable", she says.

Bishop Alfredo Verzosa of Lipa was replaced by then Msgr. Rufino Santos who was one of those who signed the said Church verdict disproving the veracity of the apparitions. Msgr. Santos later became Archbishop of Manila. According to Teresing, Cardinal Santosbecame a friend of the family and was requested by her parents to take care of her. One can just imagine Teresings's grief. Cardinal Santos took this to heart and asked her to visit him once a month. The irony of it was that, according to Teresing, they never talked about the apparitions. And It was only recently thatTeresing learned that he was one of those who signed the Church verdict.

Cardinal Santos was also instrumental for Teresing's livelihood for many years. He introduced her to Redemptorist Father Leo English, an Austrailian, with whom she collaborated for an English-Tagalog dictionary that became popular. She worked for years without pay until one day, Fr. English and the National Bookstore suddenly realized that she should be given royalites. The royalties have been a blessing to Teresing and enebled her, even to this day, to live a comfortable life.

From Baclaran, Teresing transferred to her present home in BF Homes, Paranaque, upon her doctor's advised her to stay in a bungalow rather than in a two-storey house. (Teresing has a heart ailment). Finding athemoney to buy her home needed God's help, she said. She called up the Carmelite Sisters for prayers and pretty soon, they reffered her to somebody who could give her a loan with very soft terms. Upon transferring, another pleasant surprise greeted her, her sister lives only next door!

Teresing has remained single and now lives with an adopted daughter, Mary Grace (now working at the Central Bank) who was given to her as a five-day-old baby in Baclaran Church.

59 Years after the Apparitions

Where is God in her life after the heartbreaking experiences in Lipa? Teresing is often deen attending the daily morning mass at the Presentation of the Child Jesus Parish. She said she tries, as much as possible, to follow the Carmelite schedule in Lipa. Seeing a meeting of the Legion of Mary, she "walked in" to become a member and thus do the usual duties of a Legionary such as visiting hospitals and prisons. On First Saturdays, she goes to Lipa and stays the whole day at the Marian Center for Peace to heal and pray for the sick. She has been invited even by the religious, to give talks.

A friend, Amy, ho has been Teresing's co-worker for 11 years, narrated how Teresing "intervened" in her love life. Amy was engaged and about to get married and as a friend, Teresing prayed long hours at the Adoration Chapel for her. Surprisingly, the planned wedding did not push through and it became evident that God and Our Lady had other plans for Amy. A year later, Amy got married – to a different man – and this time, Teresing was a principal sponsor.

When I asked her about the recent events in Lipa, Teresing said she is no longer aware of what is happening. She said she has become detached from all the pain and suffering she had gone through and just wants to leave everything up to Mama Mary. She has not become bitter. From what I have seen of her, she is still obedient to the Church – like a true Carmelite.

A word from a bishop

One usually sees Teresing appraching the priest-celebrant after the mass to kiss his hand – a practice she says her mothet taught her. The celebrant in the Mass that she usually attends happen to be Bishop Jess Mercado who resides in PCJ Parish. Asked by the writers what he thinks of Teresing, the Bishop said:

"My personal impression of Teresing is limitedto our contacts after the mass, when she would greet me. I got the impression that she's a person who is not "noisy". She may not be a Carmelite sister wearing the habit but I'm sure she is deeply a

Carmelite in her own heart. She strikes me as being humble and quiet, and this invites you to discover that there is something in her that is very much linked with the Blessed Mother. Her simplicity draws many people to her especially those who are in need of healing. That's why I would say to her frquently, "Sister, continue to be an instrument of God's healing to so many people."

TERESING CASTILLO, THE LIPA VISIONARY: SIXTY THREE YEARS LATER

Virginia G. Guzman-Manzo, MD

Sixty three years ago, the nation was awed and enraptured for quite a time on that big event which happened in Lipa, Batangas when a 21-year old postulant in the Carmel Convent started experiencing supernatural signs and visions of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The Lady called herself Mediatrix of All Grace.

On several occasions, a shower of sweet rose petals miraculously fell on the convent grounds as well as inside the convent witnessed by the nuns and at least two bishops. The Blessed Virgin Mary appeared to the young postulant, Teresita Castillo, fondly called Teresing, for fifteen consecutive days from September 12-26, 1948.

After an Episcopal commission that investigated the events declared in 1952 that the incident had no evidence of supernatural intervention, the supposed miraculous occurrence was doomed to die a natural death. However, this "death" did not happen. Although it was initially thought to be in the throes of dying because of the ban imposed by the commission, the piety, the enthusiasm and the faith of many people held on quietly yet perseveringly. Many continued to keep in their hearts their belief in the authenticity of the events.

It was not only in Lipa that the devotion persisted up to this day, but also in other parts of the country. Even in far away Digos City in Davao, a church was built and named as the Church of Our Lady, Mediatrix of All Grace. The devotion has steadily grown and today, its resurgence is amazing.

And what happened to the visionary, Sister Teresing Castillo? Naturally she suffered a lot because it was obvious that the commission considered the whole event as a hoax. Although she wanted more than anything at that time to be a Carmelite nun, she had to leave the convent because she had become very sickly. For 38 years, she worked with a priest at the Redemptorist Church in Baclaran to compile an English-Tagalog-English dictionary. Although she believed this work was not her mission, at least it occupied her time. She continued suffering in silence and without any complaint but her faith in God and her devotion to the Blessed Mother never waned.

What is Sister Teresing doing nowadays? It could be said that she is somewhat retired in the sense that she has slowed down in the mission she has

committed herself to do. She goes to Mass every morning at the Presentation of the Child Jesus Parish in BF Homes Paranaque, Philippines, where she presently resides. I am not acquainted with her personally although I see her almost every morning at Mass. Recently, after Mass one morning, I was fortunate to catch her in an "ambush interview" to which she graciously consented. At that time she was accompanied by a friend, Ms. Leah Isla, who after meeting with Sister Teresing five years ago, was asked by the visionary to help her in her apostolic works, to which Leah open-heartedly accepted. Along with Leah, another lady, Ms. Amelita Zapata, would go with Sister Teresing as the latter carries out her mission in her service to God.

So we settled ourselves at the last pew at the back of the church, with Sister Teresing Castillo seated between me and Leah. The visionary is now showing signs of her age; she talks softly and moves slowly, usually with the help of Leah. She has remained quiet, unostentatious, humble and soft-spoken. Since she has now some difficulty remembering specific things such as dates, names, etc., Leah has been very helpful in helping her jog her memory.

VGM: It has been 63 years since you were in the news nationwide. How are you?

SISTER TERESING: Well, I will be 84 come July 4 this year. As you can see I am not very strong anymore. I walk slowly and sometimes I need someone to hold on to when I walk.

VGM: Yes, I noticed that every time I see you at Mass. Sometimes I even see you in a wheelchair.

SISTER TERESING: Oh yes, some days my back pain bothers me because of inflammation of my sciatic nerve. So I have to use a wheelchair occasionally when I go to Mass.

VGM: Sister Teresing, since the nineties, there have been several renewed efforts to re-investigate and gather more documents to prove the authenticity of what happened in Lipa 63 years ago. In fact, a new commission was set up precisely to gather evidence and put everything to rest. However, up to the present, we have not heard of any formal and definite proclamation from the Holy See as to whether there is a reversal of the original declaration of the first commission in 1952. How do you feel about this?

SISTER TERESING: For me, I have long ago put everything in God's hands. Whatever is God's will is my will. I have been interviewed, investigated, and interrogated many times. I have told and retold my story over and over again. I have done my part. After all only God knows what really happened. My faith and my love for Mama Mary will never waver and I will continue to spread the devotion to Our Lady and keep on doing what she wants me to do up to my dying breath.

VGM: Has the Blessed Virgin Mary ever appeared to you or given you indications of her presence after the Lipa event?

SISTER TERESING: Mama Mary did not appear to me anymore after her apparitions in September 1948. But I feel that she is often with me. The shower of rose petals started again in 1991. Between 1991 to 1996, there were at least 10 occasions when there would be rose petals in our prayer room at our house in Tambo, Paranaque. At least one such incident was witnessed by my adopted daughter, Grace. On my birthday on July 4, 1999, I was in the prayer room at Munting Bukal, Tagaytay and I noticed a rose petal clinging to my dress at the middle of my chest. There were no other petals around. But after a while, when I opened my handbag, it was full of rose petals. The following year, again during my birthday in 2000, when I entered the prayer room in our home in BF Homes Paranaque, there were rose petals scattered around. Both incidents in 1999 and 2000 were witnessed by Amelita who was with me on both occasions.

VGM: What do you do with the rose petals? You must have a lot of rose petals in your possession.

SIS TERESING: Oh no, I always give them to the Convent of Carmel in Lipa or to some sick people who come to me for healing. Actually, there is only one rose petal I am keeping with me which is from the original shower of rose petals in Lipa.

VGM: Sister Teresing, what do you do nowadays? What occupies your time? Aside from praying, of course.

SIS TERESING: Well, as you can see, I am not very strong anymore. But in the past I was kept busy trying to spread the devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary. Often I was invited to give talks and conduct healing sessions in parish churches, in seminaries and convents, especially Carmel convents around the country, in schools and offices. Once in a while, I conduct counseling and healing in my house. I have been invited to Indonesia about two or three times to give short talks and conduct

healing sessions. Every first Saturday, I go to Lipa for healing sessions at the Marian Center which is next door to the Carmel Convent.

VGM: Aside from talks and healing sessions, what other forms of apostolate do you do?

SISTER TERESING: I give counseling to married couples regarding family issues. I also give blessings to the sick and the dying. I encourage them to go to confession and for anointing of the sick. I have witnessed many conversions which give me a lot of inspiration to go on.

VGM: Oh, you really have done a lot. How active are you now? Don't you get tired sometimes and wish to just stay in the house and rest and just pray and pray? After all, you are almost 84.

SISTER TERESING: Of course I get tired because most often there are plenty of people attending the healing sessions. Every first Saturday in Lipa, busloads of people would come from different cities and provinces and sometimes from other countries, too. But lately, I have slowed down because age is fast catching up with me. "The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak." I can no longer accept all invitations.

VGM: You have done this type of apostolate for many years and have reached many places. Surely there must have been many memorable experiences. Can you share one unforgettable incident?

SISTER TERESING: I have met many suffering people, not only needing physical but also spiritual healing. When I was invited to give a talk and healing session in Indonesia, there was a Chinese-Indonesian man who by all signs and symptoms was possessed by the devil. He was moaning and growling, his eyes rolling, his mouth frothing, and was mumbling unintelligibly. When people would come near him and try to pray over him, he would growl loudly and become violent. I approached and tried to let him kiss a metal crucifix. The moment the crucifix touched his lips, he growled louder and convulsed as if he had a seizure. Gradually, with a mournful moan, he slowly calmed down. After a few minutes, he was back to normal and couldn't remember what happened to him. What was unusual was when I retrieved the crucifix, it was partly corroded. How that happened, I don't know.

VGM: Wow, what an experience! I am sure the Lord will give you more years to continue helping people. As Bishop Arguelles said what is important is to move on

and continue with strengthening our faith in God and invigorating the devotion to Mama Mary. He said that because we are good Christians, we accept and obey what the Church tells us.

SISTER TERESING: That is right. That is what God wants us to do. What really matters is our strong faith, the purity of our hearts, how much we love God and His Blessed Mother, and our loyal obedience to the Church which Our Lord instituted for our guidance.

That ended the short interview and after thanking her and Leah, I asked Sister Teresing to give me her blessing which she graciously did. As we stood up to part ways, I couldn't help asking one more question which kept nagging me during the entire interview. "Sister Teresing, forgive me but I have to ask you this: are you using a perfume that is rose-scented?" She immediately answered, "No, I never use perfume. Come and smell me." I approached her closely but there was no smell of any scent. So I told her, "You see, I am really curious. Didn't you notice that all the time during our entire conversation, it was unusually windy and the smell of roses was quite strong? So I thought I was smelling your perfume." Then Leah answered, "I am using perfume. Maybe that was it. But no, my perfume is not rose-scented."

So I approached Leah as near as I could. Yes, I smelled her perfume. That should have settled the issue. But it was not exactly like the fragrance I smelled. Being a doctor I do not believe in superstition nor am I emotionally imaginative. However, I have the faith to believe that with God anything is possible even if reason or science cannot explain it.

Then Sister Teresing said, "Mama Mary must have been with us." How I wish it was so! Was it Leah's perfume that was wafting vividly all the time? That must be the answer. My mind must have been persuaded to believe I was smelling the fragrance of roses for after all, we had been talking of rose petals. Still, as I said, there is nothing impossible with God!

AN EXTRACT FROM ANOTHER INTERVIEW WITH VISIONARY SR. TERESITA CASTILLO

Mundong Noypi

13th of September 2007

Yesterday, I was part of a coverage team that went to Lipa City, Batangas for the 3rd national day of Prayer, Consecration and Reconciliation.

I had a brief interview with Sister Teresing Castillo, the one and only Filipino nun (based on historical records) who allegedly saw and spoke to none other than the Mother of Christ during several instances in the year 1948. If you recall, the Carmel convent, now called the Lipa Shrine--was also the setting of the famous "shower of roses" that occurred also in 1948. I have no data whether these miraculous events have been confirmed by the Vatican and I intend to research more on this--but one thing's for sure, Sister Teresins's blessing.

Sister nung 1948, nagpakita daw po sa inyo si Mother Mary, pwedeng pakidescribe po kung paano nangyari? What were you doing when she appeared?

The first time, I was going to my room…cell in Carmel (convent) when she appeared. Before reaching my room, I smelled the fragrance of lilies, wala naman kaming lilies around.The first time I met her, she was as she is, in white--as you see her in the statue now. And then she said, as you go to a certain place here (in the convent vicinity) she will be giving me messages there. It turned out she was talking about the vine. We have a small vine (in the garden) the only one that we had-- bandera espaniola. One day, I saw it move suddenly (on its own). The first moment I thought it was only a lizard and I went on saying my rosary. The 2nd time it was a little stronger. The 3rd time, it was so strong, my attention was caught.Ang then in the beginning, there was just a voice not to be afraid, and then there were some messages to go there for 7 days, at 5 pm in the afternoon, so I told those messages to our prioress at the time, my mother superior. Of course, they did not believe me. And then later, the Bishop. Ang sakin, ok lang basta I told them what I have seen. Ok lang sa akin at sa conscience ko.Eventually they paid heed to the several times that she appeared to our cell. Bishop Abviar our chaplain during that time said: "Go ahead and see what she wants."And so I spoke with her. In the beginning she talked about (the importance of being) priests and nuns and (of) telling the family rosary daily, for the conversion of sinners and the whole world.

Sister how old were you during the apparitions?

Twenty-one How many times did she appear to you?I would calculate around 18 times but very short moments.

Did you have any doubts about what you were seeing during that time or were you so convinced that she was the mother of God?

In the beginning she was in my room and I didn't know who she was. Later, I was told by my prioress to ask her directly who are you? So I asked her and she said: "I am your mother." And then she expressed herself as "Mary, Mediatrix of All Grace," her specific name. She was a beautiful lady. She doesn't look like a human being but you can see her eyes. She was full of radiance, so it's not really exactly a human being. However, you can see the figure although, not human but something heavenly-- because she is full of light and very bright.

Did you ever have somebody with you at any time during the apparitions?

No, I was alone because at that time, we had prayers at 5 pm in the afternoon.

Did you ever ask her why she chose you?

I did. I asked her, "Why me?" and she said "God has different ways of choosing" or something to that effect. I can't quote verbatim because it was (way back in) 1948 but that was the idea that was given to me.

Were there any major changes in your life after the apparitions?

I thought then perhaps that her messages were not only for me but for the whole world.I was just an instrument. And of course I kept asking myself, why me, I was just new here (as a novice, in the Carmel Convent)?

Sister, in what language did you converse with Mother Mary?

English

Were there secrets revealed to you that she told you were not to mention until a specific date?

A few.

How many of those secrets have you revealed so far?

Almost all, except for a few, perhaps I could call secrets.

Are you seeing signs of those things she told you to keep secret?

Not exactly, but the way things are now, I think it's leading to those revelations.

Were you also here in Lipa when it rained rose petals?

Yes, also in 1948. Before the apparitions occurred as far as my memory is concerned.

At this age, do you still have the chance to see the Blessed Mother, does she appear to you in your dreams?

Not anymore. After 1948, I forgot the year already but I just heard her voice once. She was so concerned about the family. She had many messages for the family.

What is your message for the Filipino family?

To say the family rosary as often as possible. And go to the Holy Eucharist as often as possible for the world's conversion, and for priests and nuns also.

How old are you now sister?

80 years old

Did the Blessed Mother give any warnings to mankind?

Not exactly warnings because she gave her messages in a motherly way. She said if we will not say the rosary regularly, it means that people do not pay heed to her words. There might be persecution and there would be some troubles within the church. Finally she said, my message here is the same as that of Fatima.

Sister, what is your message to the whole Filipino nation?

As I often said during interviews, the message is only one-- salvation, conversion for sinners and for the Filipinos to frequent the sacraments and to pray the daily family rosary.

For our leaders, She mentioned something about the leaders of our countries, not exactly ours, if the decision is not right or proper for the nation or for the country, there should be an awareness of God, the existence of God and that also to God may we avail of Mary or vice versa.

VISIONARY OF LIPA KEEPS A LOW PROFILE

Marrah Erika Lesaba and June Keithley

Teresita Castillo, to whom the Virgin Mary reportedly appeared in 1948 when Castillo was a young Carmelite novice, has been declining interview requests following the lifting of the Church ban against the public veneration of the image of Our Lady, Mediatrix of All Grace, a devotion that stemmed from the apparitions.

"She [Castillo] has decided to maintain a low profile. We have to respect her [wishes]," said Fr. Richard Hernandez, the chair of the new commission created by the Church to reopen the investigation into the apparitions in Lipa.

Hernandez said he was able to interview Castillo, or Teresing as he refers to her, last Thursday. He said Castillo was so happy and excited when told about the lifting of the ban that he had to calm her down.

Though she underwent so many hardships during the series of investigations into the veracity of the apparitions, Castillo has remained humble, he said. "She never complained or even asked why she was being questioned," Hernandez said.

He said Castillo, who is now 82 years old, cannot recall the dates when the Virgin Mary appeared to her but she can clearly state the message that the Blessed Mother wanted her to give the world.

In 1948, the Virgin Mary reportedly appeared 19 times to Castillo, who was a postulant at the Carmelite convent in Lipa, Batangas. Rose petals with holy images reportedly fell from the sky. In the last of her appearances to Castillo, the Blessed Virgin is said to have identified herself, saying "I am the Mediatrix of All Grace."

The bishop of Lipa at the time, Alfred Verzosa, believed in the apparitions and allowed the veneration of the image of Our Lady, Mediatrix of All Grace.

No miracle

In 1951, however, the Church hierarchy declared that "there was no supernatural intervention in the reported extraordinary happenings, including the shower of rose petals in Lipa."

Verzosa's successor, Rufino Santos, ordered that "no petals be given to anyone by the Lipa Carmelite community and the statue of Our Lady of Mediatrix be withdrawn from public view."

The ban was lifted 40 years later by Archbishop Mariano Gaviola in 1991. On Nov. 12 2009, Gaviola's successor, Archbishop Ramon Arguelles issued a formal decree lifting the 1951 ban. Arguelles also created the commission, headed by Hernandez, to conduct a new investigation into the apparitions.

Arguelles said he was merely reiterating Gaviola's 1991 order and was doing so because he saw "nothing wrong in praising the image of the Blessed Mother" and that he knew the "love of the people for her." He noted that despite the ban, the faithful have continued to go on pilgrimages to the Carmel monastery in Lipa to pray and ask for favors from the Blessed Mother.

He said the commission will evaluate the documents still available on the events of 1948 to advise the Church leadership on "the proper pastoral approach" to the continuing pilgrimage of people to the site of the apparitions.

International interest

The news that Arguelles had ordered a new investigation and lifted the ban on the public veneration of the Mediatrix has created interest not just in the local community of devotees but internationally as well.

The Spiritdaily.com website carried links to two articles published in Inquirer.net as well as its own well-researched articles from its archives.

Little wonder as the events of 1948 were headlined in national newspapers and reported internationally. Lipa was referred to as "the Lourdes of Asia" and Philippine Airlines flew special flights to fly pilgrims to Lipa. A special pilgrim image of the miraculous Mediatrix was made and brought to New York and Madrid. More than 3,000 took part in the procession that was later held on New York's Second Avenue.

Those were heady days indeed. Even former President Elpidio Quirino attended a Mass in Lipa in 1949 and joined the vast crowds in hopes of witnessing a petal shower. Thousands would line up for the water in which the petals had been immersed and miraculous healings and conversions were reported and documented.

The original statue of Our Lady, Mediatrix of All Grace, was commissioned from the sculptor Cristobal, in accordance with the instructions that Castillo had received from the Virgin Mary:

> *"I want a statue of myself to be made so that my little ones can see me. Describe me to your chaplain because I want my statue to look as you see me, and to be as large as that of Our Lady of Lourdes which stands inside the cloister."*
>
> *"I ask this from Carmel, I wish that my image be placed here. This place must be cleaned so that it may become a shrine for prayer."*

When the image was finished and revealed for public veneration, many unusual occurrences and miraculous events were attributed to it. The fragrance of the amazing shower of petals that occurred from time to time on the grounds outside the convent would fill the air for blocks and draw thousands of devotees and curiosity seekers.

Harrowing events

A message that the Virgin Mary had given in 1948 seems to foretell the harrowing events that were to come: *"Do not block or debase my sacred place nor despise my words. "*

Along with the ban it issued in 1951, the Church hierarchy instructed the Carmelites to destroy everything. The nuns obeyed and burned the diaries, petals and prayer cards, but could not bear to smash the image of the Mediatrix, so they bundled it up in rags and jute and hid it among the debris in a bodega.

It would be hidden for the next 40 years until Gaviola gave permission for the statue to be temporarily displayed in 1991. The archbishop soon issued the decree that the image be restored to public veneration and installed in the side chapel of the convent church where it remains to this day.

Blighted lives

Apart from the many miraculous healings and conversions that were ignored and the cruel rumors that the apparitions were a hoax foisted on the public by the nuns to raise money to build a church, there are the heroic actions and blighted lives of the main protagonists that are intrinsic to the apparitions.

Auxiliary Bishop Alfredo Obviar, the spiritual director of Carmel Lipa, was unceremoniously removed and remained in limbo until he was demoted and re-appointed to the diocese of Lucena.

Obviar founded the congregation of the Missionary Catechists of St. Therese and in acknowledgment of his great virtue, he has been lifted up to the Causes of the Saints and has officially passed the first step in the process toward sainthood.

His tomb and museum in Lucena is the site of many pilgrimages and a number of miracles have been attributed to his intercession.

Verzosa, who allowed the apparitions to be publicized and for the Mediatrix to be venerated, was stripped of all his administrative duties, remaining a bishop in name only.

Though he had used his family's wealth to rebuild the churches and schools of war-torn Lipa, he was falsely accused of mishandling the war reparations and finances of the diocese. He lived in exile at his Vigan home, reduced to rolling tobacco leaves to augment the family income.

The prioress of Carmel, Mother Cecilia Zialcita, was transferred to another convent and treated like a scullery maid. She is said to have prophesied that at her death, the events of the Lipa apparitions would again be reopened and devotion to the Mediatrix restored.

Castillo has survived all the denunciations and humiliations to which she was subjected. The stress from the investigation resulted in her long illness, requiring her to live at the University of Santo Tomas hospital for long periods of time. She eventually had to voluntarily leave the convent as she failed to complete the required length of stay for a novice.

Discreet silence

She worked at the Redemptorist Church in Baclaran and assisted Fr. Leo English with the publication of the now widely used Tagalog/English dictionaries. The now grown baby girl she adopted often accompanies her mother on healing missions.

She has since received a few other messages and experienced showers of petals in her home and at the side chapel of Carmel Lipa, but has maintained a discreet silence about it.

Gaviola and Arguelles have allowed Castillo to speak publicly about the apparitions and there are also a number of accounts detailing the healing of some people that she has prayed over. However, now that the new commission has convened, she has thought it prudent to refrain from speaking or being too publicly visible.

In her 80's, Castillo has been given the grace of living to see the malicious tongues silenced and a resurgence of devotion to her "beautiful lady."

An audience with Sr. Teresing Castillo 16th april 2004
Coming face to face with Sister 'Teresing' (Teresita?) Castillo was a weird experience. Sr. Teresing is, of course, the postulant from Our Lady of Mt. Carmel's convent in Lipa City, Batangas, who claims to have received messages from the Blessed Virgin Mary 11 years ago. [Note below the date this piece was written.]

The visionary is now well-known for her accounts of the apparition - our local version of Fatima and Lourdes - especially the shower of rose petals, events which the Catholic Church is still in the process of investigating. A book has been published about these apparitions, authored by media personality and Marian devotee June Keithley.

After the recitation of the rosary in our Community, Sr. Teresing led a short prayer and immediately delivered a talk about the motherhood of Mary, especially during the last days of her Son and after His death. She talked quite lengthily on the role of Mary in man's salvation: "Through her loving 'yes', we became Christians." "She's a mother whose son is God. She destroyed enmity between heaven and earth. From her, we received His blood and God received His humanity, with the same bonds of mother-child intimacy." (Sidebar: Do you realize that the flesh of Jesus was biologically the flesh of Mary?)

"There was nothing external to distinguish her from other mothers," Sr. Teresing noted, as she spoke about Mary's seemingly mundane routine of baking, fetching water, washing clothes, etc. She recounted Mary's hardship in her seven-year exile in Egypt, the loss of Jesus - probably her bitter-most experience, the consolation of which even Jesus seemed to intentionally withdrew - and Mary at the crucifixion, where she was denied to even touch her son's hands.

"She would have loved to go to the tomb with Him herself but she chose to stay put to continue His mission," Sr. Teresing went on, noting that the Blessed Mother's humility did not hinder her from her Christian zeal.

"She understands the life of Divine Grace." "She's not just the mother of Jesus, she's not just an intercessor. She is our mother." "She endured her sufferings with quiet dignity and forbearance." "Let's make her our model and inspiration."

"As St. Grignon de Monfort put it, 'He has not God for his father who has not Mary for his mother.'"Sr. Teresing proceeded to talk on Mary's virtues, foremost of which is humility, "the foundation of all other virtues."

The third part of her talk dwelled on Mary's message to her which were no different from those of visionaries from other known apparitions: the enemies surrounding the Church, the most grievous sin of abortion, the importance of parents as models to their children ("The language at home should be love."), and the need for daily Mass (if possible), recitation of the rosary, and frequent communion. Sr. Teresing reportedly asked the Blessed Mother about the significance of the rosary and the Blessed Mother, she claimed, answered, "Little one, the rosary is my favorite devotion because it covers the life of my Son."

"The rosary is like a little Bible," Sr. Teresing added.

The following are the Blessed Mother's specific messages on specific dates.

2/2/19__: *"Let peace begin with me." "Remove all resentment, bitterness, revenge..." "I am with you in your struggles."*

5/5: *"Be converted now, not tomorrow" "Jesus is a Redeemer."*

5/24: *"Calamities will not mark the end (of the world), but are merely an awakening." "Repent and be converted." "Pray for conversion." "You do the praying, I'll do the pleading."*

12/__/1997: *"Chastisement is already here but people continue to be bad. It is given little by little so people will be converted."*

The visionary from Lipa also stressed the importance of prayer - which she likened to *"conversing with God".....*"*from the bottom of our heart"* - and offering up little daily sacrifices. *"It's the act of offering that merits a lot,"* she explained.

Here are the Virgin Mary's messages to the Philippines, according to Sr. Teresing:

3/25/1994: *"I am the mother of hope and tenderness." "I love the Philippines because most of you love me." "You call on me whenever you are suffering."*

Sr. Teresing recounted her conversation with another visionary from Ireland, Cristina Gallagher, when the latter came for a visit to the Philippines: "From her seat inside the plane, Cristina saw the Philippines to be covered with a blue mantle.""The triumph of the Immaculate Heart will start from the Philippines," Sr. Teresing quoted Cristina Gallagher as saying, and then noted the EDSA miracle as a case in point.
Again, the BVM: *"I did not die on the cross but I suffered in silence and tears."*

Sr. Teresing capped her talk with a very simple advice. "Be sure to smile always when you meet people - especially people whom you dislike." (The latter comment received knowing smiles from the audience.) "A smile disarms your anger for that person," she explained.

Sr. Teresing struck everyone who saw her as simple, humble and gentle, yet with a clear and assertive voice. But what is quite extraordinary about her is that she looked a couple of decades younger than her 72 years!

An open forum and a short mass healing followed, as well as an "anointing of holy oil." The mass healing consisted of a plain recitation of a prayer from one of the estampitas she had distributed at the start of the assembly.

In the open forum, one Community member asked the visionary to describe the appearance of the Blessed Mother. "Oh, she's very beautiful!" she gushed. "Even the most beautiful Miss Universe cannot compare with Mama Mary's beauty!"

Sr. Teresing also informed the crowd that she was no longer receiving messages, the last message being in 1997. But she said the Blessed Mother may manifest her presence by way of rose scents. She also said that her relationship with

the Church "is now okay, thanks be to God." (She had experienced visitations from the devil and persecution from the princes of the church, no less, getting banished from the convent, getting hospitalized for heart attacks, and so on.)

The audience also learned that the statue of Our Lady, Mediatrix of All Grace in the Lipa City shrine was the third try of the sculptor because Sr. Teresing was not satisfied with the first ones - but that the statue somehow "corrected by itself."

INTERVIEW WITH ARCHBISHOP ARGUELLES

Totus Totus Maria (TTM): Last 12 November 2009 you issued a new decree regarding the controversial apparitions of Our Lady of Lipa in the Carmelite Convent way back 1948. What is its significance?

Archbishop Arguelles: I believe the Mediatrix phenomenon is the greatest thing that ever happened to the Church of Lipa in the last one hundred years and even from time immemorial. The lifting of the ban is intended to dispel any doubts that in 1991 Archbishop Mariano Gaviola already did so. The late Archbishop and I are deeply concerned about the faithful's great devotion to our Holy Mother. It must be encouraged and promoted, especially since it is Lipa's great privilege to be known as the place where the Mediatrix of All Grace, the possible fifth Marian dogma, has most prominently been declared by "sensus fidelium".

TTM: What prompted you to issue this new decree regarding the alleged apparitions of Our Lady of Lipa?

Archbishop Arguelles: The faithful have the right to know whether the Lipa phenomenon was authentic or not. The attachment to Mary must be promoted in these times of trial for our country and the world. Moreover, studying the so-called 1951 Episcopal Commission's statement that there was nothing supernatural in the said Lipa event, the ensuing declaration of then administrator, Bishop Rufino Santos, was clearly "overkill". I have the feeling that my benefactor, Cardinal Rufino Santos, asks me to review those acts of almost six decades ago.

TTM: There has been a growing groundswell of support for a positive declaration on the authenticity of Our Lady of Lipa, given numerous testimonies, miracles and healings attributed to Mary Mediatrix of All Grace, as well as the general fruits of the apparition. Given the formation of a new commission investigating the apparitions, is a "new" ruling on the apparitions of Our Lady of Lipa, whether positive or negative, imminent?

Archbishop Arguelles: There will be no new ruling. I want to call it a new perspective, whatever conclusions will be arrived at, which will be for the pastoral good of the people, the greater honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the better benefit of the Church in these difficult times and, of course, the glory of God.

TTM: Previous church authorities have already issued a negative verdict on the apparitions of Our Lady of Lipa, declaring that the apparitions are"not supernatural in origin". This new decree of 12 November 2009 effectively reverses the previous 1951 ruling of Apostolic Administrator Bishop Rufino Santos with regard to public veneration of the image of Mary, Mediatrix of All Grace. Given this precedent, is a "reversal" of the previous ruling regarding the authenticity of the apparitions of Our Lady of Lipa possible, under Church rules or norms?

Archbishop Arguelles: The Church reconsidered the Galileo pronouncements. The Lipa case is so insignificant compared to that of Galileo. Nevertheless, the Galileo "reversal" did not satisfy many non-believing thinkers. The Lipa "revocation" will immensely benefit the multitude of true believers world-wide. The reaction to my move was very positive and widespread except for one source which, for me, is a major setback personally.

DESPOSITONS FROM THE FILES OF THE MARIAN RESEARCH CENTER

Compiled by Mr. Francisco Dychangco

Cure of Sister Melania Sunga, R.A. Assumption Convent, Pampanga

November 10, 1983

To whom it may concern:

This is to certify that I, sister Melania Maria Sunga, born in Candon, Ilocos Sur of Mr. & Mrs. Graciano R. Sunga now belonging to the Religious of the Assumption was born with defective right foot which was diagnosed by several physicians to be incurable. From birth, December 31, 1949, I did not use any footwear until Our Lady Mediatrix of All Grace cured me with the application of water brought from the Carmelite Sisters of Lipa by an uncle, Edmundo M. Abaya who was then a seminarian at the Central seminary of Sto. Tomas University, now an incumbent Bishop of the Diocese of Laoag City. The water that was placed overnight near the statue of our Lady Mediatrix of All Grace was rubbed by my mother without applying pressure or massage over my foot. It took her a month and a half to do this before my foot straightened. Right now I can use any type of footwear and I can already walk like any normal person without limping or jumping as I used to do.

Report of Fr. Casey, S.J. ,Chief, Chemistry Dept., Ateneo

I didn't actually witness the shower of petals in Lipa, but I was lucky enough to own a petal given to me by a sister from the Carmelite Convent… I, for one, although a priest, am more inclined to believe in the supernatural explanation of things, yet as a man who has had a fair training in the scientific field, I had my doubts as to the divine cause of those petal shower

One afternoon, at about 5:30, I was in my chapel, when I was approached by one of the janitors to announce that there was a man who wanted to see me… "Father I have heard that you own a petal that can cure the sick. My daughter is very ill right now. The doctors told us she is sure to die".

I learned that the girl was suffering from cerebral hemorrhage, and have been in some sort of stupor for quite a time. The attending physician had given up all hope to save her.

I knelt at her bedside and placed the petal on her cold forehead. She didn't stir. I administered the last sacrament. All the people in that room fell on their knees and prayed with me, a hush fell among the crowd as if in reverence to an Unknown Presence. Just as the Angelus was ringing at exactly six 0' clock, the girl opened her eyes and stood up as if nothing had happened and told me, 'Father I am now alright."

Cure and Conversion of Karatul A. Silbin

Ako ay si Karatul A. Silbin, 55 taong gulang, may asawa at limang anak. Ako ay isang Muslim at tubong Jolo, Sulu. Taong 1990 nang ako ay mag simulang mag-ubo…Nagpunta ako sa Zamboanga at ang sabi ng doctor ako daw ay may cancer sa baga.... Sa tulong ng aking mga kamag-anak, ako ay pumunta sa Maynila…Limang beses sa loob ng limang buwan ako nagpagamot. Lumiit ng kaunti ang bukol kaya't sabi ng duktor ay ipagpatuloy ko daw ang chemotherapy ngunit dahil naubos na rin ang dala naming pera sa pangaraw-araw naming gastusin, hindi ko natuloy ang pagpapagamot…….Taong 1996, may isinuka na naman akong dugo…sabi ng doktor na ang bukol ay lumaki ng isang sentimetro. Ako ay nawalan ng pag-asa…

Bumalik ako ng Maynila.. Ngunit bago pa man ako pumunta sa duktor ay hinanap muna namin si Fr. Corsie… May nagsabi na nasa Lipa daw siya kaya't kami ay pumunta doon. Nang nasa malaking simbahan na kami, sabi ng isang tao doon, matagal na daw na hindi pumupunta doon si Fr. Corsie pero baka alam daw ng nasa Carmel. Pumunta kami sa Carmel pero hindi din nila alam kung saan tumitigil si Fr. Corsie. Pero sabi ng isang out sister, bakit daw namin hahanapin pa si Fr. Corsie, gayong nandoon naman ang Our Lady Mary, Mediatrix of All Grace, bakit hindi pa kami tumuloy. Nang makapasok kami, nakaramdam kaagad ako ng ginhawa. Ako ay nanalangin at humingi ng lakas ng loob. Humingi ako ng kapatawaran at ipinagpaubaya ang aking buhay sa kanya.

Lumipas ang maraming araw ngunit hindi ko nakakaligtaang tumawag sa kanya, at unti-unti kong naramdaman ang kaginhawaan na hindi ko naramdaman sa mahabang panahon… Noong Setyembre, ako ay nagpa-x-ray at ipinakita ko ito sa

duktor sa St. Luke's Medical center. Laking tuwa ko ng sabihin sa akin ni Dr. Ang na wala na raw ang bukol…Akala nga ng duktor ako ay pinagaling ng chemotherapy ngunit ang hindi niya alam ay hindi na naulit ang pagpapa-chemotherapy ko mula noong 1994.

Ako ay taos pusong nagpapasalamat sa kanya, sa Our Lady Mary, Mediatrix of All Grace, dahil sa kanya ako ay natutong magdasal sa harap ng Banal na Sacramento at paniwalaan ang milagro ng Our Lady Mary, Mediatrix of All Grace.

Sgd. Karatul A. Silbin

THE MIRCLES OF A PILGRIM IMAGE OF OUR LADY, MARY MEDIATRIX OF ALL GRACE

(Adopted from http://marymediatrixtour.blogspot.com/)

As soon as the News of the kidnaped priest Rev. Fr. Mike Sinott came out in 2009, crowds witnessed the image shed human tears.

The image is in custody of the Confraternity of Our Lady Mary. Mediatrix of all Grace, Pagadian City, testified that the image shed human tears and noticed that the mouth was open with her teeth exposed. Witnesses also testified that the image's mouth was closed when she arrived from Davao. But during her visit in Midsayap the mouth of the image opens to smile to the praying crowed and expose her upper teeth. There are some incident that the image was seen closing her eyes infront of the praying crowed.

Here's a testimony of Norma Panganiban, one of the witnesses:

"I Mrs. Norma Panganiban of Midsayap, North Cotabato testify that during our prayer vigil the Pilgrim Image's eyes blink and the fingers moved.

(SGD)NORMA PANGANIBAN"

The residents also claimed miracles were granted to them by Our Lady through the Pilgrim Image of Our Lady Mary, Mediatrix of all Grace. There are some incidents that the image was seen closing and blinking her eyes infront of the praying crowd. There were also cures and conversion during the visit of Our Lady to Midsayap North Cotabato.

MIRACLE STORY: HOW OUR LADY OF LIPA HEALED MY CLUB FOOT

Sr. Melania Ma. Sunga

Given a negative pronouncement in 1951 by an Episcopal Commission, the apparitions of Our Lady in Lipa, Batangas, Philippines are presently being given a second look by the Church. The head of the new Commission, Fr. Richard Hernandez, says that there are around 300 reports of miracles/favors received and ten authenticated cases.

Below is a case which has been passed on to the present Commission by a previous Commission way back in the 1990s. It was originally in the form of an Affidavit, testimonies under oath, before legal authorities – all the more to emphasize the veracity of the cure, the truthfulness of the witnesses and the rigorous documentation required by the Church. We have given the Affidavits a narrative format and have left the wording practically intact, although shortening it to fit space available.

I am Sr. Melania Ma. Sunga of the Religious of the Assumption. I was born on 31 December 1941 in Candon, Ilocos Sur, Philippines. I am the niece of Bishop Edmundo Abaya of Ilocos Sur. He is my mother's cousin. Being a blood relative, Bishop Abaya took care of my mother Rosario Abaya-Sunga when the latter became an orphan at a very early age.

I was born with a club foot. Because of this handicap, I could never walk without limping and wear shoes or slippers until I was miraculously cured in 1949. Even while an infant, my parents consulted a family doctor as regards the possibility of an operation to straighten my foot. However the doctor advised them that I was too small and too weak to undergo any surgery. He further advised them that despite the operation, there would be no assurance or certainty that I could walk normally.

The doctor's advice brought so much sadness to the family. My parents took it to mean that I would never be able to live a normal life when I grow up. Bishop Abaya was not spared this distressing news.

Mary Mediatrix Intervenes

Sometime in 1949, when I was eight years old, Bishop Abaya, then studying at the seminary of the University of Santo Tomas, went on a pilgrimage to the Lipa Carmel Convent together with the Rector and fellow seminarians. During the said pilgrimage, Bishop Abaya remembered me and my pitiful condition and asked the Carmel Sisters for a bottle of water previously placed overnight in front of the statue of Our Lady of Lipa - Mary Mediatrix of All Grace. The Sisters obliged and, in addition, gave him the Tagalog version of the novena to Our Lady, Mary Mediatrix of All Grace.

Bishop Abaya gave the bottle of water and the Tagalog novena to my mother when he paid us a visit in Candon, Ilocos Sur. For nine consecutive days, my mother prayed the novena and in the evening before sleeping, she would rub some water from the bottle on my club foot.

In the morning of the ninth day of my mother's novena, my father Graciano Sunga and my brother Abelardo were very surprised to see me walk without the usual limp. I also noticed that I could walk straight… My eyes then went to my club foot. A normal foot was in place. My defect or handicap was suddenly gone… As far as my family and Bishop Abaya were concerned, there was no doubt that I was miraculously cured of my defect… My miraculous cure became the hottest and biggest news in Candon, Ilocos Sur.

The Rose Petals

The loving presence of the Blessed Virgin Mary in our household did not end there. A week after my instant cure, the entire family including myself witnessed the mysterious presence of a brown rose petal inside Abelardo's pan de sal as he broke it during the usual family breakfast. As we put the said petal against the light, we saw the half body image with a halo of Our Lady, the Blessed Mother.

The following day, my sister Maria Elena Sunga, then 17 years old, was sweeping the floor in front of the altar where the image of Mary, Mediatrix of All Grace was placed or exhibited. As she tried to gather the dust in the dust pan, a strong gust of wind entered the sala and blew away the dust. In its place, six rose petals lay on the dust pan. Certainly, no one put them there.

Two or three weeks later, my other brother Antonio, then 13 years old, bought some bubble gum with the wrappers of Batman, Tarzan and Superman. He kept the three wrappers inside his shirt pocket with the intention of asking our laundry woman Mercedes to iron them on his other shirt in order to engrave the images or features of the said cartoons. As soon as he got home, he took out the wrappers and discovered that they were individually and neatly folded. When he opened each wrapper, he saw a rose petal inserted between the fold. My brother then asked who placed them inside the wrappers. No one knew how the petals got there.

My parents decided to show all the rose petals the family mysteriously received in our own home to Rev. Fr. Ferdinand Carmelo, then the parish priest of Candon, Ilocos Sur. In turn, the said parish priest advised my parents to show them to Bishop Juan Sison.

Bishop Sison advised my parents to refrain from talking about or discussing my cure and the mysterious discovery of the rose petals lest our home be overfilled with visitors. I did not find this advice odd because the story of my cure had already reached other towns in Ilocos Sur.

But Bishop Sison was not incredulous or unbelieving. On the contrary, he believed in the miraculous cure of my club foot and the mysterious appearance of the rose petals as a sign of the Blessed Mother's divine presence into our lives. He would often tell my father: "Feel free to come back. Whenever you find petals, report them to me."

True enough my parents went back to see Bishop Sison on account of the rose petals they themselves discovered while doing their routine work at home. My mother found her rose petals among her red carnations. She never cultivated roses. As regards my father, he saw his petals among the pages of the newspaper he was then reading.

In May 1949, my entire family went on a thanksgiving pilgrimage to the Lipa Carmel Convent. During the usual raffle of the rose petals inside the chapel, my name and my brothers' – Jose and Abelardo – were luckily called. We were each given a rose petal by the Sisters. To me the event proved the incessant blessings of the Blessed Virgin Mary on our family.

My family also became close to the late Bishop Cesar Guerrero when we transferred our residence to San Fernando, Pampanga. Bishop Guerrero became my brother Antonio's spiritual adviser when the latter enrolled as a seminarian in the Mater Boni Concilii Seminary in Apalit, Pampanga.

Bishop Guerrero unquestionably believed in my miraculous cure and the mysterious appearance of the rose petals in our home at Candon, Ilocos Sur. He would exhort us all members of the family to continue our devotion to Our Lady, Mary Mediatrix of All Grace.

Sr. Melania Sunga of the Religious of the Assumption

(Signed)

MY DISAPPEARING TUMOR STORY

Rosario Cosme-Mendoza

On 18 December 1948, I gave birth to my youngest child, Maria Socorro Mendoza (now Ma. Socorro Mendoza-Dichoso). During that time, my husband Dr. Telesforo J. Mendoza was still alive. He was the chief of the Department of Neurosurgery at the University of Santo Tomas (UST) Hospital and was professor of Neuro-Anatomy at the UST College of Medicine.

At the time of Socorro's birth, my husband discovered that she had a soft tumor on the left side of the head (frontal-parietal region). After a week of observation, my husband and I noticed that Socorro's tumor was getting bigger. We then got alarmed because my husband earlier thought it was a simple case of superficial hemorrhage common to newly-born babies.

A more detailed medical test revealed that Socorro's head tumor was a case of deficient ossification of the cranium leading to the protrusion of the membranes of the cerebrum containing the cerebrospinal fluid. To confirm this finding, my late husband requested the late Dr. Paulino J. Garcia, chief of UST Hospital's Radiology Department, to take a series of X-rays on Socorro's head or skull. The X-ray pictures gravely confirmed the previous medical findings. We felt almost sure we were going to lose Socorro to this disease.

Sometime in January 1949, more than a month after Socorro's birth, I decided to go to the Lipa Carmel convent to beg for prayers to the Sisters. News abounded that the Blessed Virgin Mary had been appearing to the Lipa Carmelite postulant, Teresita Castillo under the title "Mediatrix Of All Grace" and that there had been frequent miraculous showers of rose petals within and outside the premises of the cloister.

Upon my arrival at Lipa, I was gladly given an audience by the late Carmelite Prioress Mary Cecilia of Jesus, OCD. I poured out to her all the anguish and anxiety of a mother who dreaded the inevitability of the death of her child.

The Prioress Mary Cecilia advised me to say a novena to Our Lady, Mary Mediatrix of All Grace. She instructed Sis. Elizabeth of the Sacred Heart, OCD to

give me a copy of the novena and a rose petal that purportedly came from one of the miraculous showers.

I left Lipa Carmel buoyed up by the hope that the Blessed Mother would pity and assist my child Socorro. When I reached home, I immediately rushed to the room where Socorro was sleeping. She looked bluish black as if short of breath. Her condition made me panic. I started gently massaging the rose petal over her head while saying the novena. After five minutes she started to cry. My husband who was beside me said that the crying was a good sign.

On the fourth day of my novena, after the usual examination of Socorro's head, my husband noticed that the tumor was suddenly gone. There was a definite cleavage of the skull cavity previously the result of deficient ossification.

Because of this unexplained medical development, my late husband requested Dr. Paulino J. Garcia to conduct another set of x-rays on Socorro's skull. Truly, the x-ray films showed no more trace of the tumor!

My entire family attributed Socorro's sudden cure to Mary, Mediatrix of All Grace. As a gesture of loving gratitude to her, we went on a pilgrimage together with our Paco parish priest, the late Fr. Godofredo Aldenhuisen, CICM to the Lipa Carmel convent in the summer of 1949. We brought along Socorro who had since become a healthy and normal baby.

The late Chief Justice Manuel V. Moran of the Supreme Court got very interested in Socorro's case. He took all the x-ray films (before and after the disappearance of the tumor) from us including the child's medical history for submission to the Vatican in support of the cause of Mary Mediatrix of all Grace. Since then and up to the present, my family does not know what happened to those x-ray films.

MEMORABLE ENCOUNTER WITH SUBAS HERRERO

MARIAN DEVOTEE

Many of his colleagues have written about the late multi-talented Subas Herrero, truly a sweet, nice, and caring guy.

May I write about my "encounters" with Subas, the most memorable of which happened more than 10 years ago at the Carmelite convent in Lipa. During a Mass at the adjoining Mary Mediatrix of All Grace church in particular. Noticed that Subas lost much weight and he told me he was really sick. But his devotion to the Blessed Mother kept him strong, confident he can lick whatever was ailing him.

He said he attended Mass every Saturday at the Carmelite church, coming all the way from Quezon City.

SCENT OF ROSES

At the church, visionary Teresing Castillo passed by, smelling of the sweet scent roses. To which Subas and another Marian devotee, Deedee Sytangco, said she was almost like, "ang bango-bango."

It'll be recalled that in the late '40s, Teresing, then a Carmelite novice, had a vision of the Virgin Mary, followed by a shower of roses. The novice and the nuns of the convent suffered much, persecuted for "faking" a miracle.

Even the bishop, of Lipa, Alfredo Versoza, and his assistant, Fr. Alfredo Ma. Obviar, were ostracized and exiled for believing the nuns. Much later, the skeptics were proved wrong and the beatification of Versoza and Obviar are now underway. Marian devotee June Keithley wrote an authoritative book on the Lipa miracle.

DEATH IN USA

But back to Subas, who I hardly saw after that Lipa meeting. But I was glad to hear that he seemed all right, in good health. I told myself his devotion to Mary Mediatrix of All Grace paid off, in a manner of speaking. But then Subas was a product of Ateneo, which has a special devotion to the Blessed Mother. Then I read in the papers that Subas Herrero died in the US (he was an American citizen) a few

days before he turned 70. I like to think that Subas died happy in the arms of Our Lady, Mary Mediatrix of All Grace. Also, am certain that the Blessed Mother is watching over June Keithley during these trying days. She's suffering from terminal cancer.

STAGE-SCREEN ACTOR

Onstage, I remember watching Subas in "Fiddler on the Roof," "My Fair Lady," and "Last of the Red Hot Lovers." On television, he was fun to watch in "Champoy" and other sitcoms. But on the big screen, Subas was usually cast in villain roles in action-drama movies, especially those topbilled by Fernando Poe, Jr. and Joseph Estrada. But there was one exception though, the musical "Sinta." There Subas sang and danced and clowned. Belated condolences to his wife Maripaz (Spanish mestiza) and their children.

A TESTIMONY ON OUR LADY OF LIPA

Estella Roque

I have read the Totus Tuus issue on the Lipa apparitions and I would like to share with you two instances of healing attributed to Our Lady of Lipa that I have witnessed.

Miracles at Home

One of the miracles happened in my own home. My mother contracted tuberculosis In her mid-twenties. At that time, there was no cure for the disease. As years passed, her right lung collapsed. Her lungs were full of pus that the doctor had to insert a tube in her side to siphon the pus into a bottle. She became very weak and did not have any appetite to eat.

My mother had a friend, a Belgian nun, who visited her regularly. Upon learning that she was not eatinh anymore, the nun went to Lipa (this was in the early 1950s) where got rose petals believed to be showered by the Blessed Virgin. She brought the petals to my mother and put them in a bottle filled with water for her to drink. The very next day, my mom craved for food, became better and eventually gained a little weight. She lived until 1958.

You would say that my mother was not totally healed. But if she did no have the blessing from God she would not have lived that long in her condition. She had only one lung functioning – she needed to have to big tanks of oxygen at home, one for use and one as a reserve. Her kidneys also got affected. There was also a time she became blind for about two weeks, but she recovered her eyesight.

I would also like to mention that my Mama, about a couple of months before she dies, she had been talking (to someone?) in the middle of the night. She would speak in Spanish and English. She must havve been conversing with the Virgin Mary because she said would have a church built for theone she was taking to. We found that quite perplexing, but upto now, it crosses my mind once in a while that maybe it was really the Blessed Virgin she was speaking with.

My mother was buried in a pink gown. It was simple but nice dress that my aunt made for her. It was hanging for two years in my closet and was never touched. I asked her a few times when she would wear it. Her usual reply was that

she would wear it for a special occasion. Apparently, the ‘special occasion’ she meant was going home to her Creator, in a dress the color of which is very much associated with Mama Mary, especially, Mary, Help of Christians.

“Miracle” Baby

Mama Mary must have loved our neighborhood so much. At about the same time as my mother’s health improved, a baby girl of about 5 to 6 months was being treated because she was born with an underdeveloped head. (her brain was exposed!). This is a very delicate condition as many complications could arise. That baby’s family brought her to Lipa. In no time, the baby’shead developed to cover and protect her brain. The baby is a daughter of the Mendozas who lived a block away from us. The family was religious - they went to mass daily.

Unfortunately, I cannot recall the name of that baby girl who was healed. It ws her sister Lucia who was close to me as we were of the same age and schoolmates at St. Theresa’s College-Manila. When I saw her many years ago, she was very normal and the prettiest of the brood.

This particular story landed in the front pages of the local newspapers, with photos showing the baby before and after she was healed.

PILGRIMS TESTIFY TO GRACES RECEIVED DURING NATIONAL CONSECRATION

Nirva'ana Ella Delacruz

Pilgrims who went to Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Church in Lipa, Batangas for the national consecration last June 8 attest to graces they received from the Blessed Virgin Mary during the event in Lipa, Batangas,

Rose petal under his pillow

"I just want to share that I am healed inside and out because that is what I asked from Mama Mary. I thank the Lord," a 27-year old pilgrim from Makati who declined to be named said.

He explained, he received a rose petal from the Blessed Virgin under his pillow the morning after the pilgrimage, after specifically asking Our Lady for a "petal" to signify his healing from chronic liver disease.

In an interview, he vowed to return to Lipa Carmel to personally thank the Virgin Mary once his lab tests come in.

Spiritually refreshed

Other pilgrims claim being spiritually refreshed from the June 8 experience.

"That one day of ceasing from all activity was a big help to be silent and talk to God. And I found this peace in the arms of Mary," Oggie Cayetano from Tondo, Manila said.

The 22 year-old Cayetano, who came with his siblings, mother and friends, said the past days have been particulary "noisy days" for him because of personal and family concerns, making him welcome the grace of consecrating himself and the country in a place believed by many to have been visited by the Blessed Virgin in 1948.

Philippines' timely consecration

He added, the consecration of the Philippines is timely, since the country is beleaguered by such a high degree of evil, manifested through corruption in government, injustice and discord.

"When people are sad and suffering, we always look for motherly care. We need the love and nurturing of a mother and we find this in the heart of Mary," Cayetano explained in an interview.

The delegation of 38 pilgrims from Metro Manila and Cavite also listened to talks on the Immaculate Heart of Mary, one of which was given by renowned Mariologist Fr. Catalino Arevalo, SJ.

An estimated 500 people were present at Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Church for the 10 a.m. holy mass and consecration rite.[1]

[1] cbcpnews.net

MIRACLE OF ROSE PETALS REVISITED

Nestor Cuartero

Could it be that the miracle of the rose petals that reportedly took place in Lipa, Batangas in 1948 is still alive and in full scented bloom today? According to accounts from that period, the Blessed Mother appeared several times to a young novitiate, Sister Teresita Castillo, who witnessed the unexplainable manifestation of rose petals in her bedroom, and around the convent.

In August 2013, we escorted the family of the wife's cousin, Lourdes Florencio-Templado, and her husband, Corsini, a medical doctor, and their son, Chester, to the Carmelite convent of Our Lady of Mediatrix in Antipolo del Norte, Lipa City to hear mass and to pay homage to Our Lady. The occasion led to a chance encounter with Bishop Ramon C. Arguelles, who offered mass that morning.

Weeks later, Lulu and her family flew back to Redding, northern California, where they reside on top of a hill. One morning, Lulu found something unusual on top of her prayer book at her own private chapel within the house. She was surprised to see a dry rose petal therein.

She thought it was impossible to find something as remote as a rose petal in her chapel when there wasn't a single twig, much less a bouquet of roses in the area. Lulu dismissed the incident but neatly filed the petal within the pages of her book.

A few days after, she saw another dry rose petal at the foot of the statue of the Blessed Mother in the very same chapel. She has not found a suitable explanation for the little mystery in her household except to believe that the Blessed Mother must be keeping an eye on her. Lulu, a devout Catholic, is president of the Legion of Mary in her parish and an active church worker.

Lulu's story serves as a good take-off point in the light of a renewed church investigation on the so-called Miracle of the Shower of Rose Petals in Lipa in 1948. A book called Miracle of the Rose Petals was published recently by the archdiocese of Lipa recounting the stories of people who claim that they had been healed by Mary Mediatrix.

The book, edited by Aloma Monte de los Reyes, unveils first-person confessionals by men and women who believe they had been touched by Lipa's miracle of the roses. It was published by the Commission on Research and Documentation (CORD) by the Archdiocese of Lipa-Batangas and sent to me as a gift by my old high school friend, Dr. Robert Magsino.

In his introduction, Bishop Arguelles writes that the intent of the publication is to reach many more simple faithful, who trust only in God and in the Blessed Virgin Mother. 'They need this spiritual assurance that the heavenly blessings are never wanting,' he continues. For Arguelles, Lipa is the place where a lot of these graces are experienced.

One of these is an account by Aleli Guzman-Quirino, a medical doctor, who confessed that her daughter Militza was downed by a series of complications that started with a case of small pox in 1948. The situation so alarmed Aleli and her husband, Tony, who watched over her while in confinement for many days at a Manila hospital as her condition threatened to deteriorate every day.

One time, recalls Aleli in her article, a visiting friend gave them a rose petal picked up all the way from the Carmelite convent in Lipa. Having strong faith in Mother Mary, the couple decided to slip the rose petal into Militza's pillow. Then, Tony had a brighter idea. He skilfully inserted the petal between two slices of graham crackers and offered it to his daughter as a sandwich.

After Militza had consumed the sandwich, she felt miraculously better and asked for her first glass of drink in many days. That signalled her road to recovery after having gone through convulsions, intimating death days before.

The book lists down a total of 58 testimonials written by varied sources who all claim they had experienced either the shower of rose petals or healing caused by them.

Some of them, such as the confession by Col. Felix V. Duenas, are actually letters sent to Arguelles by concerned citizens, who believe they had been healed after visits to Our Lady. Col. Duenas wrote that he was able to lift his injured arm after praying to Mary, and that signalled his road to recovery.

The confession stories are titled thus: A Widow's Thanks, No More operations, I live Only Because Of Prayers, Sweet Fragrance, I Was Saved, I Was Helped, A Man's Faith, A Muslim from Jolo, Sulu, Ang Milagro sa Aking Buhay.

The public sharers have a common goal in mind in sharing their stories. They want the Catholic Church to reverse an earlier church ruling declaring the shower of roses a hoax and at last recognize the truth behind the Lipa miracle.

MIRACLES ATTRIBUTED TO MARY MEDIATRIX

Nestor Cuartero

In medical science, testimonies rank the lowest in the ladder of acceptability. Medicine being an exact science, it relies heavily on exhaustive, drawn out scientific research before a finding or claim, much less, a phenomenon, is given a stamp of approval.

Is it the same in the practice of one's faith or religious life?

The book, Miracles of the Rose Petals, unveils many more revelations on how the Blessed Mother healed or came in aid of distressed persons. Last week, we cited some of them. Here are more testimonials as lifted from the book published by the Commission on Research and Documentation under the Archdiocese of Lipa-Batangas. The book attempts to shed light on the series of reported apparitions by the Blessed Mother before a novitiate at the Carmel convent in Lipa in 1948 and the subsequent shower of rose petals that followed.

Sister Melania Maria Sunga of the Religious of the Assumption was born with a club foot, a deformity in the shape of the foot where the ankle serves as the sole. Throughout her childhood, she walked with a limp that caused her so much physical pain.

Though not religious as a child, Melania grew up with a prayerful mother, who offered novenas and daily masses for her daughter's recovery. She constantly prayed to Mary Mediatrix, until one morning in 1949 when she was 9, Melania woke up with a miracle.

Overnight, her right foot suddenly straightened like it had never been dislocated. In her recollection, Sister says she hasn't forgotten the joy of having to wear slippers for the first time in her life and also having to walk straight. Sister Melania's miraculous healing became the biggest news in her hometown, Candon, Ilocos Sur at the time. It is also the subject of an affidavit signed by the good sister herself as part of her testimony.

The miracle didn't begin and end with Melania's healing. A week after the unexplained incident, her brother Abelardo, then 11, found a brownish rose petal inside his pan de sal as the family was having breakfast. 'As we put the said petal

against the light, we saw the half body image with a halo of Our Lady, the Blessed Mother,' writes Sister Melania.

Another brother, Antonio, then 13, discovered rose petals pressed within candy wrappers he was collecting for their images of Batman and Superman. A sister, Elena, then 17, was sweeping the floor in front of the altar where an image of Mother Mary was enthroned. As Elena gathered the dust in a dustpan, a strong wind blew away what she was about to collect. Next she looked, she saw six rose petals on her dust pan.

These manifestations served as an inspiration for the Sunga family to undertake a thanksgiving pilgrimage to the Carmelite convent in Lipa in May 1949.

The confession by Santiago Datu Sapadas, a Muslim who converted to the Catholic faith after personally witnessing a miracle inspired by Mary Mediatrix, is worth telling and re-telling. In 2000, Santiago's pregnant wife was rushed to a hospital in Davao where she was diagnosed with an enlarged heart filled with fluid.

Her skin had turned bluish in shade. She could hardly breathe after experiencing a series of heart failures. Doctors warned Santiago of his wife's fatal condition, that she might never see the break of another day.

When friends and family members introduced Santiago to Our Lady, he faithfully obliged and joined them in praying to her. A relative placed a rose petal from Lipa on Minda's chest. A tearful Santiago promised he would join any religion that could heal his wife and save their baby.

Within three days, Santiago, in his affidavit, says Minda slowly recovered. As soon as she was discharged from hospital, fit and healthy, Santiago had himself baptized in Catholic faith.

In the same book, Mimit Zialcita writes about her own moment of realization in an essay called Testimony of My Cure. Diagnosed with malignant growth in her throat area, she talked with Mother Mary every night, as she lifted her sickness to the Lord. Thy will be done, she prayed.

While her father was confined in a hospital, he was visited by 'the visionary from Lipa.' Mimit writes: She asked what was ailing me….She put her hand over my throat as she prayed. I felt the heat from her hand covering my throat. Then, she

took some blessed oil and made the sign of the cross over the two spots where my tumors were. She prayed to Mother Mary, Mediatrix of All Grace, and she asked the guardian angels to guide the hands of the doctors.'

Mimit went ahead with her surgery to remove the lumps, described by her doctor after a laboratory test as carcinogenic. How surprised she was that when she awoke, her doctor also expressed surprise that after biopsy, they were found to be benign after all.

The doctor said it was the first time he had operated on a tumor that showed malignancy during aspiration only to be proven benign later.

'He couldn't believe it, so he told the pathologist to do a biopsy of the whole thyroid that was removed. He was very happy for me and congratulated me for beating the odds,' writes Ms. Zialcita.

To this day, devotion to Mary Mediatrix at the Carmel convent in Lipa intensifies with every telling and retelling of miracles attributed to Our Lady. Hundreds of devotees, including many from out of town, flock to the convent on the first Saturday of every month when masses and a dawn procession are offered in her honor.

REFLECTIONS ON MARY MEDIATRIX OF ALL GRACE IN LIPA CARMEL MONASTERY FROM 1948 AND SUBSEQUENT YEARS

Archbishop Mariano Gaviola, DD.

HIS EXCELLENCYMOST REV. SALVADOR Q. QUIZON, D.D.AUXILLARY, COMMITTEE ON THE REPORTED Lipa Carmel APPARITION SARCHDIOCESE OF LIPA, TAAL , BATANGAS

Dear Bishop Quizon,

....Blessed are they who have not seen and have believed" (Jn.20:29).

When I was installed as Archbishop of Lipa on August 15, 1981, I, a true "Doubling Thomas", believed that the reported Marian visions and showers of roses at the monastery of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, Mediatrix of All Grace in Lipa Coty, were a "hoax".

I first heard the rumors about Our Lady Mediatrix in Lipa Carmel when I was a student priest at the UST Central Seminary in 1951-53. At the time, I adhered to the common belief that some nuns used blowers to simulate a shower of rose petals out of a desire, noble and sincere, to establish a monastery chapel.

It would not be the first time that lesser measures were resorted to, for greater purposes. That, I believed, would explain why the Mother Prioress contrived with Teresing Castillo to claim having visions and receiving messages from Our Lady. It would have been a surefire way to raise funds.

There were other rumors then that I also believed – that because of the hoax, the Prioress and Teresing Castillo were banished from the Lipa Monastery by order of the Ecclesiastical authorities. In fact, Teresing remained in Lipa Carmel for three years, but was advised by the Prioress to leave the monastery until such time that she fully recovered from a lingering ailment. I never bothered to consult a Church Authority, nor read any official church document on the subject matter. My belief then was based entirely on hearsay. In retrospect, I wonder whether this could explain the beliefs of countless others who may also have prejudged the Lipa Carmel case.

PETITIONS TO ALLOW PUBLIC VEBERATION OF THE IMAGE OF OUR LADY

A few months after my installation as Archbishop of Lipa several individual and groups approached me, to request that the Image of Our Lady Mediatrix of all Grace be brought our for public veneration. I politely refuse to do so, explaining that I had no knowledge about the investigation and findings of the Commission of Bishops regarding the events that took place at Lipa Carmel in 1948. I asked for more time to pray over and study the case.

From the year 1984 onwards the request multiplied, and with greater intensity. But for reasons I cannot explain, and despite a keen interest to do so at the time, it was only in 1986 or 1987 that I finally launched my own investigation.

I wondered why only a few of these petitions came from the faithful in Lipa City , much less the Archdiocese. More disturbing still, it appeared to me that except for a very few, the Clergy of Lipa was cold to the idea. Inevitably the words of Our Lord came to mind: "….. No prophet is without honor except in his native place, indeed in his own house" (Mt. 13:57)

It therefore provided no small amount of relief when sometime in 1988. I received a petition letter signed by about a thousand of the faithful in Lipa, led by the Governor of Batangas, the Mayor of Lipa City, and their respective wives. Comforting too were the number of lay leaders of the Archdiocese mostly from the San Sebastian Parish in Lipa City , who were among the petitioners.

Moreover, some truly trustworthy persons volunteered to testify as personal witnesses to the shower of roses. They argued (convincingly), that the use of blowers could not have been possible, as there was no electricity at that time. More importantly, they claimed that the roses floated straight from above, perpendicularly, thereby disproving that they were blown away from the monastery. Otherwise, the petals would have formed an arc before fluttering downwards.

Let me here point out that Mother Cecilia was the Novice Mistress of the Lipa Carmel Monastery from the time of my installation in 1981 until her death in 1983, She was no self-effacing that I was never acquainted with her. I never even knew that she was the very same Prioress of Lipa Carmel when Teresing Castillo entered the monastery and reportedly experienced the visions of our Blessed Mother in

1948. I only learned this after her death in 1983, when I was in Hongkong for treatment. Nonetheless, it can be gleaned from the biographical sketch that was issued by the Lipa Carmel Monastery after Mother Cecilia's death, that the good Mother led a holy life. Cleary, Mother Cecilia could never have perpetrated such a flagrant crime as the so-called “great hoax” of Lipa Carmel in 1948 and thereabouts.

OUR LADY MEDIATRIX OF LIPA AND HER FILE

Allow me to explain the lack of exact dates, and of full names of persons and places in this paper. I left my file on Our Lady Mary Mediatrix of Lipa Carmel in the care of Archbishop Gaudencio R. Rosales, my successor. Before the Archbishop came, I entrusted the same file to Sister Vivian de la Cruz, MCST, who was then my private secretary. I instructed her to hand it over to Archbishop Rosales as soon as he settled in I also informed the Archbishop of the existence of the file soon after he arrived.

A year or so before Archbishop Rosales assumed his post, I formed a Special Committee to study the events directly relating to Our Lady Mediatrix of Lipa Carmel that transpired even after the promulgation in 1952 of the Decree of the CBCP Episcopal Commission which declared, among others, that no supernatural intervention took place in Lipa Carmel in 1948.

I informed the Special Committee of my private file on Lipa Carmel. Several times, I urged the members to view its contents.

Obviously therefore, I am working on this paper from memory. Nonetheless, I fear no scruples in attesting to the veracity -- in substance at least -- of what I shall lay bare in this “Reflections”. May the light of the Spirit of Christ may be my only Guide in my selfless quest for “the truth that sets (us) free” (Jn. 8:32)

THE SEARCH FOR INFORMATION FROM CERTAIN CHURCH SOURCES

To my great surprise and disbelief, the only document of value for this purpose that we found in the archives of the Chancery office of Lipa, were copies – repeat, copies – of the CBCP Episcopal Commission Decree of 1952

If I recall rightly, the Decree categorically declared that no supernatural intervention whatsoever took place in the so-called apparitions and showers of roses in the Lipa Carmel Monastery in 1948.

In addition, the Lipa Carmel nuns were strictly prohibited from talking about the said events. They were also order to destroy or burn all materials related thereto. Furthermore, the Image of Mary Mediatrix of All Grace was to be placed in seclusion, if not destroyed. Faced with this blank wall, I proceeded to the following.

1. I wrote a letter to the present Archbishop of Cebu, His Eminence Ricardo Cardinal Vidal, who is also my immediate predecessor in Lipa, requesting information concerning the investigation by the CBCP Episcopal Commission of the Lipa Carmel case of 1948, and its conclusions.

Cardinal Vidal gave me his reply when he visited me at the Bishop's house in Lipa City . To my dismay, the Cardinal had not seen the records of the investigation. However, His Eminence heard much about the Lipa Carmel case from the revered Bishop Alfredo Obviar of Lucena, who was Auxiliary Bishop of Lipa in 1948, and evidently, a rich source of first hand information. Although Cardinal Vidal spoke in general terms, I gathered that the late Bp. Obviar was a believer in the Lipa Carmel story.

I further surmised that Cardinal Vidal himself believed, veiled though his allusions might have seemed, that the Lipa Carmel story was credible, if not out rightly true.

I then addressed a letter to the Most Rev. Bruno Torpigliani, Papal Nuncio to the Philippines at the time, requesting for any record from his good office of the investigation of the CBCP Episcopal Commission. In reply, Archbishop Torpigliani apologized for sending back only copies of letters that were of practically no importance. The fact was that the Nunciature had no record of the investigation and decision of the same Episcopal Commission.

Soon after, I wrote His Eminence, Jaime Cardinal Sin, requesting that he permit Father Pio Bagamo, then secretary Chancellor of the Archdiocese of Lipa, to look into the archives of the Archdiocese of Manila and see whether documents relating to the Lipa Carmel investigations existed. Father Pio was assisted by a

religious sister, the archivist of the Manila Archdiocese. But their long and arduous search was of no avail.

The foregoing is significant considering that late Rufino Cardinal Santos was Archbishop of Manila, and concurrently the Administrator of Lipa. It was during his administration that the Lipa Carmel investigation was undertaken. Further, Archbishop Santos signed the CBCP Episcopal Decree as head of the Investigating Commission.

It would be expected therefore that records, or copies of records of the entire process of investigation would be kept in the archives of Lipa or Manila , or both.

Just be baffling is the fact that we were notable to trace any similar record at the archives of the CBCP.

At about this time, Ms. June Keithly, a TV producer, was on her way to Rome to widen her own research about Lipa Carmel. She asked for a recommendation letter to the proper authorities at the Generalate of the Carmelite Fathers in order to gain access to their records about Lipa Carmel. Afraid that the fathers would not feel comfortable with Ms. Keithly as a media personality, I recommend instead Rev. Fr. Cecil Arce, of whose prudence and capability had full confidence and who was taking up doctoral studies in Canon Law. I requested him to accompany Ms. Keithly to the Carmelite Generalate.

I was made to understand that the ranking superiors of the Carmelite fathers in Manila had initiated the Lipa Carmel investigation.

But as if to compound my perplexity, Fr. Arce and Keithly came back empty-handed except for a few papers that were of practically no relevance to our purpose.

Then like a shaft of light the good Fr. Pablo Fernandez, O.P., came to my acquaintance. A professor at the UST Central Seminary, Fr. Fernandez confided to me his great love of books on spirituality and related subjects, He was very interested in private apparitions.

According to Teresing Castillo, the good old Father expressed surprise and concern when she told him that her last confessor and spiritual director was the late Cardinal Santos who passed away in September 1973. Teresing told me that Fr. Fernandez strongly advise her to have a new spiritual director.

Fr. Fernandez revealed to Teresing that he had seen and read the records of the Lipa Carmel investigation in their seminary library, However when he returned after some years in Spain for Rome, to his amazement, the documents in the library were no longer there!

I was so impressed by Fr. Fernandez that I readily urged Teresing Castillo to have him as her spiritual director and confessor.

In 1991, I was overjoyed by a visit from Fr. Fernandez, who came all the way from Manila to Lipa, despite his age and bad heart. Teresing accompanied him. We had an animated conversation. It was obvious that he was not only interested in the Lipa Carmel story -- he was also a believer. At one point he confided that he was convinced of the spirituality of Teresing Castillo.

Fr. Fernandez was called to his heavenly abode on June 1, 1993, Thanks to this man of God, we came to know that indeed, there had been a pile of records of the Lipa Carmel investigation, and its conclusions.

AN ASSUMPTION SISTER

Perhaps the most convincing healing I came to know about in connection with the rose petals from Lipa Carmel, was that of Sr. Melanie Sunga, an Assumptionist sister. On her own volition she visited my residence in Lipa City . Exuding reverence and sincerity, she narrated in detail the healing experience bestowed on her through Our Lady of Carmel.

A native of Ilocos Sur, Sr. Melania was born with right club oot. During her late childhood, her mother went on a pilgrimage to Lipa Carmel. She returned home with some water and rose petals that were given her by the nuns of Lipa Carmel. She applied the water and the rose petals on the afflicted foot of Melania. They then prayed a novena to Our Lady. Throughout the novena, they found petals of roses in different parts of their home. They then witnessed the foot of Melania turn completely normal. When Sr. Melania showed me her right foot, I could not believe that this was once a club foot from birth, I was truly normal.

Perhaps a year after her visit, Sr. Melania wrote me a deeply touching letter. She must have been assigned in the Diocese of Malaybalay at the time. She appealed for a speedy reopening of the Lipa Carmel case of 1948. She wanted to

see in her lifetime the triumph of Mary Mediatrix for she was convinced that Our Lady truly appeared to Teresing Castillo.

TERESITA CASTILLO

It must have been in the year 1989 when I finally invited Teresita Castillo to the Bishop's residence in Lipa for an interview. Our talk started at 11:00 a.m., and lasted without break -- until 2:00 p.m. Teresing was completely at ease throughout the interview. Utterly open and free, she answered my questions with alacrity and spontaneity. She could not control her tears when telling me about how one priest interrogator treated her roughly and threateningly. More so, when a high ranking church dignitary called her a devil when she paid him a courtesy call. All this notwithstanding, Teresing never showed rancor nor resentment. Instead she acted with reverence and charity.

From that time on, Teresing saw me for counseling at least once a month, until I left the Archdiocese. Always, she had the same humble, reverent disposition as when I first interviewed her.

Teresing Castillo was, for me, a person without guile. She is very much a woman of prayer, and throughout her life she retained the prayer life of a Carmelite nun. With childlike conviction she stressed that all she had narrated and written about our Lady of Lipa Carmel in 1948 and in subsequent years was the truth. “Salvis de internis”, I have no reason to question the genuineness of her piety.”

Through all our conversation Teresing was invariably consistent in her answers to my questions. Not once was she evasive, nor did she engage in double talk. She spoke spontaneously and clearly.

NEW SHOWERS OF ROSES

It will be recalled that on November 12, 1948, the Lady Mediatrix told Teresing that the apparition would be her last. I do not know when exactly the shower of roses stopped, but it is likely that by 1992, with the Decree of the CBCP Episcopal Commission, the showers also ceased.

Doubtless therefore, it was a most pleasant surprise for the devotees of Our Lady when in 1991 a series of showers of roses occurred once again. The first took place on January 16, 1991 at the altar on the right nave of the Lipa Carmel chapel,

where the Image of Our Lady Mary Mediatrix of All Grace had been once again exposed for public veneration (since 1990). This happened in the presence of Teresing Castillo and two male companion, a realtor, and her driver. The realtor companion of Teresing, exceedingly exited, repeatedly asked forgiveness for his sins and cried like a child.

Those familiar with the chapel of Our Lady would know that such a shower could never be explained by human machination.

More showers followed on different dates, particularly on Jan. 24th and 29th,all in 1991. Some showers occurred in the residence of Teresing in Parañaque, Metro Manila. Sometimes while she was miles away from home. Another occurred on Oct. 29, 1991 at the residence of Mr. and Mrs. Higinio Custodio in Balayan, Batangas, when the Custodios had as their guests, Teresing Castillo and prominent members of the Center for Peace-Asia, Teresing, Nelly Lopez and Dely Mojares were napping in one of the bedrooms. When Ms. Mojares got up to go to the restroom, she was struck by the sight of petals of roses spread out across the room. She hurriedly awoke Ms. Lopez and Teresing Castillo. They then called in the Custodio family and the other guests. This made their day, as they prayed in thanksgiving.

The happiest of them all must have been Mrs.Eddie Custodio. Two days later, it would be her birthday. What a gift! Years before I became Archbishop of Lipa, Mrs. Custodio was already the Prioress of the Third Order of Carmel in the Archdiocese. Her devotion to Our Lady Mediatrix is outstanding.

On July 6, 1992 Teresing observed her birthday through a day of prayer at a retreat house in Tagaytay City . While laying prostrate before the Blessed Sacrament, she felt drops on her head. When she stood up, she found that rose flowers – not merely petals -- fell on her. Ever so thoughtful. Teresing gave each of the flowers to Ricardo Cardinal Vidal and myself when she visited Ceby the following month of August. I still have this precious gift with me.

Confronted with these facts, one thing comes to mind: Could this be a sign of our Lord Jesus approval of my decision regarding the Image of His Mother? Is this not Mother Mary's affirmation likewise? Would to the good Lord that a better mind and more deserving person help us find light!

SOME IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

Among the issues or questions which I deem of considerable consequence regarding the Lipa Carmel story are the following:

1. In the written account of Teresing Castillo's extraordinary experience at Lipa Carmel from Sept. 12 suddenly became blind. This happened when she confided to the late Bp. Obviar that while in a trance she experienced a three-hour agony on the cross. Was this not a psychosomatic disorder? At that time Teresing also had fits of vomiting and stomach pains. Because of her health, she was advised by the Prioress to leave until she was healed. Did Teresing at that time suffer from a psychological imbalance? Teresing herself revealed to me that her doctor prescribed tranquilizer drugs for her. After some time she feared addiction, and so stopped taking the drugs on her own. This is attested to in a hand-written letter addressed to me by Rev. Fr. Leo James English, CSSR.

Because of the foregoing ailment, Teresing also consulted a lady psychologist on the advise, I think, of Rev. Fr. Vicente Marasigna, SJ. Fr. Marasigan has studied in even greater depth than I, the case of Teresing. It was clear to me that Teresing is very confident of herself, and the lady psychologist, apparently, had a positive impression of her.

I have always found Teresing to be sound and sharp of mind, straightforward, completely confident and honest. I saw no psychological imbalance throughout our acquaintance.

2. I also find it hard to understand the account of Teresing's having experienced three agonizing hours on the cross. Whether she was in ecstacy or in a trance when this occurred is not clear to me. What is more puzzling is that this agonizing experience happened hardly two months after she entered the monastery. However, the account adds that the devil tortured Teresing throughout her agony. At the same time, Teresing was comforted and strengthened by Our Lady Mediatrix.

In seeking to understand the above, I recalled the sacred scripture that says, “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers…. (Gen. 3:15)

3. Also puzzling was the fact that in her last message to Teresing on November 12, 1948, Our Blessed Mother revealed that the apparitions would end. How then, that beginning from January 16, 1991 up until recently, showers of roses and a scattering of rose petals have resumed in different places on different occasions?

Faced with this seeming discrepancy, I have no doubt that Our Mother Mary can explain herself in her own special way to our fullest satisfaction. It is plausible that Our Lord Jesus allowed these things to happen in order to pave the way for the reopening of the cause of His Blessed Mother Mary Mediatrix of All Grace. This, too is my humble prayer.

SR. MARY ELIZABETH, OCD

Sr.Elizabeth was the first nun of the Lipa Carmel Monastery whom I invited for an interview. Having entered the monastery as an extern nun before 1948, she was a witness to most of the happenings in Lipa Carmel. Sr. Elizabeth is also well known throughout Lipa and other diocese for her exemplary simplicity, contagious vivaciousness and childlike candor. Her tender love for the poor seems irrepressible. Because of her enticing personality, she has won quite a number of friends in Lipa Carmel.

Although I cannot recall the details of what she said during our conversation, one thing stands out -- her conviction that the happenings reported in Lipa Carmel regarding Our Lady Mediatrix of All Grace, Teresita Castillo, and the showers of roses are true. She also affirmed that there was no human intervention in the reported events, much less malice nor intent of deceit to induce people to contribute to the construction of a chapel. She was in tears as she recalled the innuendo and rumors that assailed the integrity of the Carmelite nuns. I find her a most credible witness.

SR. BERNADETTE, OCD

Sr. Bernadette entered Lipa Carmel five years after the 1948 episode. Among the staunchest champions of the cause of Our Lady Mediatrix of Lipa Carmel, her exceedingly great devotion to Our Lay evoked a “mother and child” relationship between them. Time and again, tears flowed silently as she prayed and communed about her. Like a child, she makes “tampo” when Our Lady does not grant her

prayers. (Deep inside her, though, she is always wholeheartedly resigned to God's will.)

When she was the librarian of their monastery, Sr. Bernadette sent me a volume of letters that they have received from foreign countries including Spain and the US . Mostly handwritten, the letters came from Lipa Carmel. Together with the letters, Sr. Bernadette sent me her own. Her letters unfolded at length. They manifested how intimately personal her devotion was, and her steadfast confidence that the cause of Our Lady in Lipa Carmel would be "vindicated" in God's time.

Having carefully gone over all these precious letters, I would not blame Sr. Bernadette if she believed that they confirmed the Lipa Carmel incidents.

Incidentally as of this writing, I received a letter, from Sr. Bernadette dated February 27, 1995. She could not have known that I was working on this paper at the time that she wrote the letter. With touching simplicity, she described what she shared during their "Vintage Years Seminar" held at St. Scholastica's Center of Spirituality in Tagaytay City . Present were several nuns from different Carmel monasteries in Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao , including a Carmelite Father. She explained to the group how and when she came to decide to enter the monastery. The immediate cause, according to the letter, was what she heard about Mary Mediatrix of All Grace as told to her by Sr. Stephanie, OCD, of happy memory. Before then Sr. Bernadette revealed that from her childhood she was not at all interested in anything religious. In fact, she was wordly. Her having embrace the religious life was just like the experience of St. Paul in Damascus – a sudden grace of conversion and mission. Also, her religious life evolved on the two-fold message of the Blessed Virgin to Teresing, mainly to pray for priest and to spread devotion of Our Lady, carried perhaps by the tearful narration of Sr. Bernadette, all those present, including the priest, were driven to tears.

I would like to pay tribute to the spirit of obedience of Sr. Bernadette when she consented that I keep in my private file all the letters regarding Our Lady Mediatrix which she entrusted to my care, including those of her own. Her sincere remonstration notwithstanding, she finally acceded to my request that I preserve the letters, after I explained how much I prized them, adding that these could be of some help to the cause of Mary Mediatrix sooner of later.

It is my studied belief that Sr. Bernadette is an invaluable asset in favor of the cause of Mary Mediatrix of All Grace.

SR. ALPHONSE OF MARY, OCD

Having made her perpetual profession on November 21, 1933 Sr. Alphonese joined the first batch of Carmelite nuns to establish their new foundation in the Archdiocese of Lipa. This was on May 23, 1946. Five months later, on October 15 th , they moved to the new building of the present Lipa Carmel Monastery with the construction work still going on. The first mass on the new site was celebrated on the same day.

A picture of "Lady Poverty" and innocence, Sr. Alphonse struck me as a great religious nun. My acquaintance with her, which I treasure, started in 1988. I was informed of her pressing desire to see me about Our Lady Mediatrix of All Grace. She sent a handwritten letter about Our Lady Mediatrix. Remarkable in its simplicity and shortness, the letter ignited in me a corresponding desire to see her in person. Not too long after, I paid her a visit. We spoke at great length about her impressions and convictions regarding the apparitions, the messages and showers of roses that took place in Lipa Carmel from September 12 to November 12, 1948. In graphic terms, she narrated her experience when she accompanied Teresing Castillo, who held on to her shoulder, from the visitor's parlor up to her cell on the upper floor of the monastery. This was after Teresing became suddenly blind during a talk with the late Most Rev. Alfredo Obviar, then Auxiliary Bishop of Lipa. Sr. Alphonse vividly recalled the petals of roses that were strewn like a carpet along the stairway up to the cell of Teresita Castillo.

The following quotation capsulizes my short-lived acquaintance with the late Sr. Alphonse and the imperishable impression she left on me.

"When we drew our Patron Saints for 1990, Sr. Alphonse was very happy because she got Our Lady Mary Mediatrix of All Grace. She followed with keen interest the development regarding Mary Mediatrix (Lipa). Two years earlier, she had written to our Archbishop, Mariano G. Gaviola, to tell him that she was already old and sickly, and that she wanted very much to testify. She wanted to live to see Our Lady's triumph. One of her last and greatest consolations was the visit of our Archbishop early this year. For almost three hours she opened her heart to him and

never tired afterwards of saying how happy she was that she was able to speak to him. On March 5, at her request, our good Archbishop entered to anoint her. In his homily at her funeral mass, he was to say that his visit with Sr. Alphonse had left a great mark on him. “Her faith was so alive, there was not even a shadow of painful resignation to the Will of God. All was gladness”. He considered this great religious of Carmel .” (Taken from the resume of the life of Sr. Alphonse as released by the Lipa Carmel Monastery after the latter's death.)

EXPOSURE OF THE IMAGE FOR PUBLIC VENERATIONS

After declaring that there was no supernatural intervention whatsoever regarding the events at the Lipa Carmel Monastery in 1948, the Decree of the Episcopal Commission of the Philippines Hierarchy also banned the Image of Our Lady Mediatrix of All Grace from the public. The Image was withdrawn from the monastery chapel, and kept in complete seclusion.

It is a tribute to the nuns of Lipa Carmel that not one of then had ever approached me with a request that I allow the Image of Our Lady to be put back at their chapel again. In fact in 1983, while recuperating from a major surgery, I was visited by Mother Aimee who was then the Prioress of Lipa Carmel. She disclosed her deep anxiety as well as of her Community, when she learned that some persons had been going around to solicit support to have the Image of Our Lady brought back to the chapel for veneration. Mother Aimee then assured me that, obedient to the provisions of the Decree of the Episcopal Commission, they had nothing at all to do with the endeavor. She said they were completely resigned to the Philippine Hierarchy's Decree.

Then came that fateful night of May 20, 1990. While in my way to the chapel for night prayers, I was informed that the very dear Sr. Alphonse was called to her eternal abode. Thereafter, I immediately instructed my private secretary, Sr. Tomasa Lagman, MCST, to inform Mother Jacinta, the Prioress, that I would say the requiem mass for Sr. Alphonse the following morning.

On the morning of May 21st, while taking my shower, I suddenly decided to have the Image of Our Lady exposed in public during the funeral mass and throughout that day, until 6:00 pm. In hindsight I myself was surprised by this decision. Why did it come to me so spontaneously? How come I did not for a

moment think of consulting anyone? But the Lord God knows I was truly grateful to the Holy Spirit, Mary's divine Spouse, for this singular inspiration. It defies my imagination to think of the jubilation which engulfed the Carmelite nuns when they heard of the decision through my secretary, which was conveyed to them just about a hour before the funeral mass.

THE FUNERAL MASS OF SR. ALPHONSE

Upon my arrival at the monastery chapel around 11:00 am. Of May 21 st , I was met by an extern nun who was jumping for joy. As I entered the chapel, I was exceedingly surprised by the number of devotees that had come despite the short notice. I learned later that they were already gathered at the chapel before the sisters received my message allowing the exposure of the Image of Mary Mediatrix of All Grace to the public as a homage to Sr. Alphonse.

Soon after we marched in procession towards the main altar I saw for the first time the lovely Image of Our Lady. In a simple setting, she was placed at the right side of the presbytery. I was deeply touched and could not describe my feelings then. I was in deep thought, when the realization came that this would be the first time the Image of Our Mother was seen public after being banned for 40 years.

I felt comfort and joy to see the handful of priests who helped concelebrate the mass with me. I could not help but wonder whether the congregation in attendance was aware that Sr. Alphonse was the last golden link in the chain of events that led to my decision to allow the public to again venerate the Image of Our Mother. This was the constant prayer of Sr. Alphonse. As one of the Carmelite nuns said, “Sr. Alphonse obtained in death what she could not obtained in life.”

FEAST OF OUR LADY OF MT. CARMEL, JULY 16, 1991

The solemn novena and masses in preparation for the feast of Our Lady of Carmel always draws a large number of devotees to Lipa Carmel. But as could only be expected in 1991, the turn-out was something else. The devotion to Mary Mediatrix was inflamed by the daily influx of pilgrims throughout the year. Devotees literally jammed the chapel on July 16, 1991.

The mass started at 10:00 a.m. and I was the main celebrant and homelist. Dozens of priests concelebrated with me together with Bishop Salvador Q. Quizon,

Auxillary Bishop of Lipa, and Rt. Rev. Alfredo Madlangbayan, P.A., Vicar General of Lipa.

Whether prompted by the Holy Spirit, I spontaneously felt this was the time for a solemn announcement. Toward the end of my homily I proclaimed that from that day onwards the sacred Image of Mary Mediatrix of All Grace will be exposed for daily veneration, subject to the regular schedule of when the chapel is closed to the public. I emphasized however that proper church authorities can rescind or modify the decision.

In addition, I made it clear that in connection with the public veneration of the Image of Our Lady, the following instructions and conditions were to be strictly observed:

1. First and foremost, utmost reverence and veneration be accorded to the Blessed Sacrament at the main altar. Only after a visit to the Eucharistic Lord may the devotees of Our Lady Mediatrix proceed to venerate Her Image at Her altar.
2. Pilgrims and visitors should observe reverence, proper decorum, and silence in the chapel at all times.
3. Let it be known that the chapel is an integral part of the Carmelite monastery. Consequently, the rules of the monastery, especially those concerning the cloister, the observance of silence of visiting hours, be religiously respected.

In conclusion, I explained the main reason for my decision, I simply wanted to find out, by the grace of God, what would be the spontaneous response of the faithful. Namely, whether the response would eventually develop into a form of "sensus fidelium", a factor vital to the cause of Mary Mediatrix of All Grace in Lipa Carmel.

A SPECIAL COMMITTEE TO REINVESTIAGE THE LIPA, CARMEL CASE

Lest it be overlooked, I hereby state that I was never alone in all the measures I took as earlier described. I sought the prayers of many, many devout people for guidance from the Holy Spirit. I constantly prayed for the Lord's blessing, and sought His will on whether his Mother's cause at Lipa Carmel be revived. I ceaselessly sought that intercession of Our Blessed Mother and of Her Holy Spouse,

St. Joseph patron not only of the Universal Church, but in particular, of the Archdiocese of Lipa.

Inspired by the overwhelming response of the thousands of devotees of Mary Mediatrix confronted by the increasing number of healings, both spiritual and corporal, that came to our knowledge; urged by filial love and devotion to Our Blessed Mother, and by a prayerful yearning for the truth, I finally firmed up the conviction that the time had arrived to create a Special Committee that would study in depth whether there were enough grounds to raise the Lipa Carmel cause to higher church authorities to determine whether a re-opening of the Lipa Carmel case is warranted.

I finally created this Special Committee at one meeting of our Presbyterial Council of Lipa. It was agreed that the Committee would be composed of seven(7) members whom the Council will choose by secret ballots from among the Diocesian and religious priests of Lipa. Also, that the first seven (7) to get the highest number of votes would form the committee. More still, that I order to keep secret the members of the Special Committee, only the Bishop would count the ballots. Furthermore, that the elected members be informed by the Archbishop through a formal letter of appointment. The secrecy was important so as to prevent undue influence or pressure on the members of the Special Committee.

NATURE OF THE ASSIGNMENT OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE

The Special Committee having been formally organized, the members were informed that their work as not to pass judgment on the findings of the CBCP Episcopal Commission, much less to question its decision of the Lipa Carmel case. They were simply told to make all the needed investigation and to study the repots about the many extraordinary incidence that occurred after the Decree of the CBCP Episcopal Commission. In short, the Special Committee was supposed to focus their investigation only on reports about Lipa Carmel that took place AFTER the promulgation of the same Decree of 1952.

However, I also authorized the Committee to gather testimonies of personal witnesses to the Lipa Carmel events in 1948 and the early years thereafter.

Far from wanting to impugn the findings of the Epicopal Commission, we simply wanted to know for ourselves what would be the testimonies of witnesses

under the present circumstances compared to what they might have said under the circumstances when they were investigated by the CBCP Episcopal Commission.

The main purpose of the Special Committee was to verify cases of physical healings that were attributed to Our Lady Mediatrix of All Grace after the Decree of 1952. For its guidance and information the committee was invited likewise to read for themselves the file on the Lipa Carmel case at the office of the Archbishop of Lipa.

The Special Committee was then to submit their findings to the Archbishop of Lipa, together with their considered opinion as to whether or not there were enough solid grounds to request from higher Church authorities to re-investigate the Lipa Carmel case.

THE EPISCOPAL COMMISSION DECREE OF 1952

As referred to earlier in this paper, the only document we found at the archives of the Lipa Chancery of the Lipa Carmel case is a copy of the Decree of the CBCP Episcopal Commission issued in 1952. In substance, the Decree categorically mandated that all matters and materials referring to t he Lipa Carmel events in 1948 had to be destroyed. Moreover, the nuns were ordained to observe strict silence about the same reported events. The Image of the Mediatrix was to be withdrawn from the public or even destroyed.

I never questioned the decision in the Decree. I personally knew each member of the Commission and knowing their character, intelligence and moral integrity, I refused to believe the rumors being bruited about, that some of the members were under duress when they signed the document, at the instance namely, of the late Papal Nuncio to the Philippines , Most. Rev. Egidio Vagnozzi. I found it hard to believe in fact that Archbishop Vagnozzi would even think of intimidating any member of the Commission.

All this notwithstanding, the fact is that we have also received reports, letters, and affidavits attesting the contrary of my contention. Neither can I question the credibility of the authors of the said communications.\

I also submit the great importance and attention be given to the postscript in the same Decree of the Episcopal Commission. If I recall rightly, the postscript

states that the provisions of the Decree were to be strictly enforced and observed until such time when the Holy See comes out with its own verdict. (Underscoring supplied). Whereas, to the best of my knowledge I do not think that the Holy See has ever come out with such a verdict.

MY MASS ON THE GROUNDS OF LIPA, CARMEL ON FEB. 6, 1992

Every first Saturday of the month is special to a vast number of Filipino Catholics. In response to the appeal of the Blessed Virgin of Fatima, many go to church and receive Holy Communion on that day. They pray for the sanctification of the Clergy, as requested by the Blessed Virgin through the children; Jacinta, Francisco, and Lucia. At Cova da Iria, Fatima , in Portugal She appeared every 13th of the month from May to October, except on August when she appeared on the 19th.

But the first Saturday of February 1992 was a "First" in the history of Lipa Carmel. On this glorious day, people from all the walks of life and from many parts of the country streamed to Lipa City to pay homage to Mary Mediatrix. Thousands of pilgrims came and went the whole day. But some 20,000 to 30,000 remained and gathered for the special mass to the Blessed Mother at 4:00 p.m. The huge ground of Lipa Carmel overflowed with Marian devotees.

The afternoon mass was organized by a group of lay persons. The anxious Carmel nuns assured me that their only involvement was to allow the use of their grounds. With trepidation, I consented to be the main celebrant, but excused myself from giving the homily. I recommended instead, Msgr. Alfredo Madlangbayan.

To avoid traffic I slipped into the monastery hours before the mass. I went to the chapel to pray and prepare for the mass, only to be besieged by the people who wanted to make a confession. I found myself hearing confession up until the time for mass.

Going out of the chapel to the especially prepared altar at the portico, I saw, with disbelief and complete awe, the immensity of the crowd that filled the monastery grounds. Just as impressive was their orderliness. One could feel their palpable fervor and filial devotion.

It was truly inspiring. At the same time, I was surprised by the number of priests who came to concelebrate with me – both the secular and the religious clergy belonging to different dioceses.

THE SPINNING AND DANCING SUN

Before and during the mass on this unforgettable first Saturday of February 1992, the sky was overcast as though covered by a mantle which benignly protected the faithful from the sun.

The priest-concelebrants went to their places of assignment to distribute Holy Communion. Seated behind the altar, I started to perceive a stir among the crowd. In no time, the stir mounted into clapping of hands and cries of joy. Looking at the excited crowd, my first impression was that their clappings were to welcome an important or popular personality who just arrived. Then I realized that their heads were turned upward, and shifting my eyes towards what was drawing their attention, I saw in awe the extraordinary movements of the sun.

I also saw some of the priests who were distributing Holy Communion similarly attracted by the sun and unconsciously suspending the Holy Communion. Suddenly, the sun shot through the radiant and crimson-red clouds, at times spinning vigorously, at other times as though shooting downwards and backwards in a rapid succession. The rays were of different colors. It was striking that I was able to stare straight into the sun for several minutes without suffering any glare. The sun appeared perfectly round. It seemed like the Holy Eucharist in a golden monstrance.

The uncontrollable reaction to the ecstatic and overjoyed crowd, many of whom I was told were in tears, is simply beyond description.

The vastness of the crowd, their overwhelming reaction to the heavenly phenomenon, the behavior of the sun in the firmament, and the combined impact of all this was too much for me. Despite my original resolve, I decided to speak during the occasion.

Throwing caution to the wind, I spoke after the post-communion of the mass. Briefly I explained the Teachings of the Church as enunciated by Vatican II in “Lumen Gentium” about Mary and our Christian devotion to Her. While it is true

that Our Lord Jesus is the only Mediator between God and man (1Tim. 2:5-6). as Mediatrix of All Grace, Mary in no way obscures nor diminishes this unique mediation of Christ, but rather, show its superabundance of the merits of Jesus Christ and because of His infinite mercy and love, Jesus allows Mary to participate in His unique mediatory power. According to the principle of cause and effect, the further the distance of the effect from the cause, the greater the power of the cause.

I recall having said also that if other countries had been blessed with the apparition of our Blessed Mother, e.g., in Lourdes , France , and in Fatima , Portugal , why can't the Philippines be similarly blessed? Ours is the only Christian nation in the whole of Asia . The Philippines is Marian out and out. Our beloved nation is endearingly dedicated to the protection of Mary of the Immaculate Conception as our Patroness.

For the first time, I declared in public that personally, I was fully convinced that the happenings of Lipa Carmel in 1948 and subsequent event related to Our Blessed Mother are very much worthy of belief. I added that I am a firm believer of the veracity of the said events.

In retrospect, it is significant that similar sightings of the dancing sun had been witnessed by many people two or three years earlier and on different occasions. On the other hand, I had never seen anything of the like. Neither had I been desirous of having the same experience. The foregoing event therefore on Feb.6th appeared “loaded” with a singular message as far as I was concerned.

Considering that the Holy See accepted my resignation as Archbishop of Lipa on Dec. 30, 1991, presumptuous though it be, it as all too natural for me to interpret this memorable experience as a gift from Our Blessed Mother. “What a beautiful farewell”. I thought. (Come to think of it, was it not also possible that through the unusual behavior of the sun, our almighty and loving Father wanted to have His presence felt by the thousands of devotees to Our Blessed Mother as a reward of their devotion to Her?)

Holy Scripture abounds with passages emphasizing the presence of God through the behavior of the clouds or the sun in the firmament.

The Transfiguration of Our Lord is described as follows: “He was transfigured before their eyes… His face became as dazzling as the sun, His clothes

as radiant as light" (Mat.17:2). Church tradition finds the words in the Revelation as referring to Our Blessed Mother: "A great sign appeared in the sky, a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet. And on her head a crown of twelve stars" (Rev.12:1). In fact too, 70,000 people witnessed a similar behavior of the sun during the last apparition of Our Lady to Francisco, Jacinta, and Lucia in Fatima , of Oct. 13, 1917.

In this connection, it is not quite far-fetched, nor will I feel guilty of unbridled fanaticism or emotionalism, should I find it utterly possible that God, in His infinite mercy, by allowing the phenomenon of the revolving and dancing sun, placed His stamp of divine approval on the humble, unrelenting efforts of countless people to propagate devotion to Our Lady Mediatrix of All Grace of Lipa Carmel.

Indeed, would it be too presumptuous of me to believe that Our Lord Jesus wanted to show through this phenomenon His joy when after 40 years of seclusion, the Image of His Mother was once more brought out for public veneration since May 21, 1991?

PARANORMAL OR THE DEVIL'S INTERVENTION

In view of the foregoing I would be generous if I were to concede the possibility that the visions of Teresing Castillo, and the messages she received, the shower of roses, the healings that took place at different times and places, and all other events related to Our Lady Mediatrix were nothing but paranormal events. Paranormal means they simply cannot be explained scientifically. To my mind, paranormal things belong to the natural order. They do not relate to the sacred, much less the supernatural. But the case of Lipa is contrary because everything that we hear about Mary Mediatrix in Lipa Carmel is always related to the sacred and the supernatural.

On the other hand, it is quite far-fetched, if not a contradiction, to conclude that what happened and continues to happen at Lipa Carmel in connection with the devotion to Our Lady Mediatrix of All Grace, are machinations of Satan. As a matter of fact, the messages received by Teresing from Our Blessed Mother are in substance, the same as the messages of Our Lady of Lourdes and Our Lady of Fatima. It is most unseemly of Satan to be giving messages that urge the faithful to pray for the sanctity of priests and religious, to do penance, and make acts of

reparation for our sins and for the sins of the whole world. As our Lord Jesus reminds us: “Every kingdom divided against itself is laid to waste. If Satan is divided against himself, how can his kingdom last since you say it is by Beelzebul that I cast out devils…” (Lk. 11:17-20).

Obviously, Satan will be destroying his kingdom if he were the author of all the great events at the Lipa Carmel Monastery and related cases.

With regards to the dancing sun, we are told that some scientists explain the phenomenon as a natural effect caused by the interaction of the radiance of the sun and the movements of the clouds. Granting that this is true, I find it difficult to explain how it was that several of those present at the Lipa Carmel grounds when I said mass on Feb. 6, 1992, did not see any unusual movements of the sun? Among them were several seminarians of the School of Theology who attested that they had seen nothing unusual on the occasion.

It behooves us to recall further the scriptural passages wherein God proclaims His presence or omnipotence through the movements of the sun, the clouds, and other celestial bodies. (cfr. Ex. 3:2-3; 14:24; 19:18-19; Math. 27:45; 52:53; Acts 9:3-5; Rev. 10:1; etc.).

CONCLUSION:

As earlier mentioned this “Reflections” does not intend in any manner to impugn the integrity, capability and good intention of the Most Rev. members of the Episcopal Commission who came out with the Decree on Lipa Carmel in 1952. I have personally known each one of them, and I hereby vouch for their intelligence, prudence and wisdom. May they rest in peace. Placed under the same circumstances that obtained at the time of their investigation, and based on their own findings, I think I would have decided as they had done.

This humble presentation is rather focused on the happenings and findings that could be gathered throughout the period immediately following the issuance of the Decree up to the present.

Notwithstanding however my own inadequacy and the limited study and findings I present above, I doubt if I would have made the same direction under the present circumstances.

In conclusion, allow me to submit, Your Excellency, that there are sufficient reasons for your Special Committee to delve more deeply and intensively into the areas of its (Special Committee) concern. As delineated somewhere in this paper, I humbly submit likewise that there is urgency in this matter. I fervently pray that your Committee be constantly guided by the light of the Spirit through the intercession of Our Blessed Mother and the protection of St. Joseph .

May the Most Blessed Trinity and the Holy Family of Nazareth be with you always.

The Lord is Risen. Alleluia Alleluia Alleluia

MARIANO G. GAVIOLA, D.D.
Archbishop Emeritus of Lipa
Easter Sunday, April 16, 1995

FROM SILENCE TO ACCLAMATION:

MY JOURNEY WITH MARY, MEDIATRIX OF ALL GRACE

Bishop Guillermo V.Afable, D.D.

Diocese of Digos, Davao del Sur

If one was to make a pilgrimage of churches, particularly Marian Churches in the Davao Region, one will be struck by one church, in fact it is a cathedral, named Mary Mediatrix of All Grace Cathedral in Digos City, capital of the Province of Davao del Sur. It stands out because it is the only one with this name. In fact, in the entire region of Mindanao, it is the one of only three churches with such a name. Oh what a rarity! One would wonder then, why and how did such a place chose that title of Our Lady and where it originally came from.

Well, the story of the Mary, Mediatrix of All Grace Cathedral goes back decades ago in 1948 in the now City of Lipa, Batangas. Reportedly, sometime from August to November of that year, a young postulant named Teresita Castillo experienced a series of appearances by the Blessed Virgin Mary at the Carmelite Monastery. In one of her appearances, Our Lady called herself "Mary, Mediatrix of All Grace". As a sign of the Lady's heavenly origins, Teresita suddenly became blind but later recovered her sights as promised. The series of apparitions were also accompanied by the amazing and inexplicable shower of rose petals experienced by the nuns themselves, including Bishop Alfredo Verzosa DD of the Diocese of Lipa, and his auxiliary Bishop Alfredo Obviar DD of the Diocese of Lipa, as well as countless other people outside the Monastery. Witnesses attest to the fact, that these two Bishops did believe in the veracity of the so called "Miracle of Lipa". In fact, it is reported that Bishop Verzosa referred to the Lady as "Our Lady of Lipa".

Upon the request of Our Lady herself, a statue of her, that looks as she was seen by Teresita Castillo was made by one named Irineo Cristobal because she wanted others especially her little ones, to see her too. Later, public veneration of this statue was permitted and encouraged by ecclesiastical authorities which increased in numbers over the three year period from 1948 to 1951. Pilgrimages to Lipa from all over were undertaken. Reports of miraculous cures and conversion were recorded. The Mediatrix story naturally became a sensation, until the fateful

day of April 11, 1951 when the decree of the Bishop's Commission investigating the phenomenal events, was issued.

The commission concluded that the evidence and testimonies of the events of Lipa "excluded any supernatural intervention in the reported extraordinary happenings." A subsequent decree also put an end to the spread of the devotion, the display of the statue and all the public veneration of Our Lady in Lipa which unfortunately, even extended far beyond the confines of Lipa. For decades a silence and obscurity of Our Lady of Lipa prevailed over Lipa Carmel and spread quickly to the rest of the country. However, devotees and believers alike, keeping everything in their hearts, they persisted and continued to silently sing and pray to her and with her. One such devotee was Msgr. Clovis Thibault, PME the prelate of the newly established Prelature of Davao, which at that time encompassed the whole Province of Davao.

As intimated in Msgr. Thibault's fiesta message on August 1951, the new titular and her statue had already been introduced to the community at least three years earlier. And on August 22, 1951, the Municipality of Digos was erected a parish but the patron of the church was formally changed from the popular San Isidro Labrador to the unknown Blessed Virgin Mary, Mediatrix of All Grace, to the great dismay of the towns people. Nevertheless, as years went by, as devoted sons and daughters of Mary, they learned to embrace her as their own.

Why such a radical, unexpected change? I strongly suspect that Msgr. Clovis Thibault, PME had so decided to have this change because of his personal belief in the phenomenal events of Lipa three years earlier. Cardinal Ricardo Vidal, Archbishop of Cebu, when asked if he had any knowledge of Msgr. Thibault's devotion to Our Lady of Lipa, said that indeed he was. According to the Cardinal, he had a close association and friendship with Bishop Obviar of Lipa. Msgr. Thibault must have personally wanted a memorial church of that great gift of Our Lady's visit to the Philippines. A church dedicated to Mary, Mediatrix of All Grace. A church as it were, where Our Lady of Lipa "took refuge"

A replica of the image of Our Lady of Lipa was brought to Digos from Manila and placed inside the church by the first parish priest, Rev. Fr. Maurice Levielle, PME of the newly created parish. He testifies to the fact of the connection to Lipa of the Mediatrix Church in Digos. In a letter sent to me, he relates futher that,

because of the negative verdict of the investigating Bishop's Commission, they had the Mediatrix image repainted to another color to hide it's true identity. They too, were affected by the negative verdict and had somehow veiled the story of Mary Mediatrix of All Grace. It would seem, further, that for same reason, the official name adopted was not exactly the same used in Lipa. And so, through the decades and so, Our Lady of Lipa in Digos, though venerated and honored as Mediatrix since 1951, her true story was never completely and truly disclosed.

The Apostolic Daughters of Mary, a local congregation of women religious founded on August 22, 1989, by the first bishop of the Diocese of Digos, Bishop Generoso Camina, PME DD. The patron of the Congregation is Mary, Mediatrix of All Grace. We cannot ascertain now why the good bishop did decide to put the congregation under the care of Our Lady under this title. We could however, say that this was another congregation of sisters that unwittingly keeps alive the memory of Our Lady of Lipa, making her known and loved as she is.

I was appointed by Pope John Paul II, the Marian Pope, as the Co-Adjutor Bishop of the Diocese of Digos in April 24, 2002. Then, on June 21, 2002 I was joyfully welcomed and installed in the Mary Mediatrix Cathedral. I decided unexpectedly, upon the advise of friends, that as a fitting act of faith on that solemn occasion of the beginning of my pastoral ministry in Digos, I led the faithful in the consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. And so, I did. That was the beginning of the special Marian Pilgrimage.

Like any newcomer to a place in June 2002, I became curious about the history of our Patron of the Cathedral in Digos City. It became a personal quest since I was soon to become its Pastor as Diocessan Bishop of the Diocese of Digos. This curiosity increased even more, when discovering no one seemed to know the real story of our Patron. The quest led me to Lipa Carmel, where it all began, to the Carmelite nuns, to the tomb of Bishop Obviar in Tayabas, where I met Miss Teresita Castillo, the visionary, and the countless other devotees quietly making Mary Mediatrix known and love as she is.

On her feastday in Digos on August 22, 2002, for the first time I told her story to the present generation of devotees and to the faithful of Digos in attendance during the Pontifical Mass. I told them how honored and privileged we have been to have given "refuge " as it were to Mary Mediatrix of All Grace. I also exhorted the

faithful to remain ever grateful to Our Lady for that special visit and to express this gratitude by our remembrance and specially by our obedience to her requests as devoted sons and daughters. Our task now is to recognize her as such as to deepen our devotion to her and lead others to Jesus Christ her Son, with the aid of her maternal guidance and protection. Her messages in Lipa as in other privileged times and places where she had appeared, remain invaluable for our continuing spiritual journey on earth.

Since then, the veil of silence and obscurity of Mary Mediatrix of All Grace in Digos has been lifted. The story of Our Lady of Lipa can once again be told and echoed through the years to come.

Shortly afterward, we looked for the original image of Our Lady and found it in the Bodega, dirty, covered with layers of paint, disfigured, discarded. We retrieved it to have it restored in Manila. In the process, we discovered, still attached to the stand of the image the name plate of the artist who made it- Irineo Cristobal. Yes, he is the same one who made the image in Lipa. This must be one of several copies made during the period 1948-1951. The image in our custody, in fact is a very close replica of the one in Lipa Carmel. It shall now be a priceless historical souvenir, indeed, of those eventful days in 1948.

On the 53rd Patronal Feast day of the cathedral Parish on August 22, 2003, the newly restored original image of Mary Mediatrix of All Grace was once again enthroned in the Cathedral. She was also crowned during the Pontifical Mass to the great delight and wonderment of parishioners. On the eve of that same feastday, we had encouraged and insisted upon Teresita Castillo, who came for the fiesta, to share with us, Digos devotees, the story of Our Lady of Lipa. Humbled and reluctant though she was, she nevertheless obliged us later. We silently listened to the story, for the first time, from the visionary herself.

On September 12, 2004, Archbishop Ramon Arguelles of Lipa approved the holding of the 1st National Marian Pilgrimage to Lipa which was supported by the CBCP as the National Day of Prayer and Reparation for World Peace and Sanctification of the Clergy. I participated in the 2nd National Pilgrimage on September 12, 2005, and there I experienced that indeed, despite the silence and obscurity of Our Lady of Lipa, the devotion and veneration has remained alive and enthusiastic among bishops, clergy, religious and numerous lay faithful. Then and

there, I was given the privilege to tell the pilgrims, our story of Our Lady of Lipa who took “refuge” in Digos. A few years later, Archbishop Arguelles in recognition of the Lady in Lipa in Digos had accepted our invitation to honor her there by celebrating the Eucharist with us.

Fr. Melvin Castro of the Diocese of Tarlac, a long time devotee of Our Lady of Lipa initiated the Confraternity of Mary Mediatrix of All Grace. He introduced this in Digos on her feastday August 22, 2007. In his homily at mass, he gave a beautiful tribute to Mary Mediatrix of All Grace and exhorted us to true devotion to her according to the teachings of St. Louise de Monfort. The following year, the Confraternity of Mary Mediatrix of All Grace was formally convened in the Diocese of Digos.

On 22nd of every month since then, the Confraternity and other devotees of Mary, from near and far, come together to honor her there by joining the Aurora Procession right there at the Cathedral grounds, followed by the celebration of the Eucharist. Through this Confraternity, She will be made known even more and true devotion to Mary will be fostered among Her devotees and all the faithful of the Diocese. It is hoped that the sons and daughters of Our Lady, burdened by the yoke and challenges of our times will find in these Sacred Grounds a Marian Shrine – a place and time of solace, peace, and healing of mind, body, heart, soul. A shrine right here in the heart of the Marian City of Digos, at the intersection to Cotabato City in the west, to general Santos City in the South, to Davao City in the North. A city, created on the feast of the Nativity of Mary, September 8, 1980.

May 13, 2008

Digos City

DID MARY, MEDIATRIX OF ALL GRACE, APPEAR IN LIPA?

Archbishop Ramón C. Argüelles, DD

(In celebration of the 150th anniversary of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Lourdes, France, the 22nd Mariological Congress was held in Lourdes last September 2008. Archbishop Ramón C. Argüelles of Lipa was one of the speakers. This condensed version of his talk appeared in the January-March 2008 issue of the Totus Tuus Maria magazine.)

It was during the episcopate of Bishop Alfredo Versoza (1916-1950), the first Filipino bishop of Lipa and his auxiliary bishop, the then Msgr. Alfredo Obviar, the so-called Marian Apparitions in the Monastery of Carmel in Lipa (founded 1946) took place.

Teresita Castillo celebrated her 21st birthday on July 4, 1948 by "escaping" early in the morning at five from her father's house to enter the Carmelite Monastery of Lipa. She is the youngest of seven children of former Batangas Governor Modesto Castillo. At the time of the apparitions, Teresita's father was the Judge of the Court of Industrial Relations. The Castillos were very influential and distinguished both in the town of Tanauan and the whole Batangas province.

Teresita's entrance into the monastery was not well received initially by the family, who tried all means to get her back. Teresita steadfastly refused to return home, preferring to follow God's call. The trials of Teresing did not escape the devil's interest. Satan tried to draw her away from her chosen vocation. On the 31st of July, at fifteen past eight in the evening, moment of great silence as observed by the Carmelite community, Teresita was startled by knockings at her door. A male voice introduced himself as satan, while emitting foul odor in her cell. The postulant would be subjected to such infernal visits several times in the next days and weeks.

At around five in the afternoon of September 12, 1948, Feast of the Holy Name of Mary, postulant Teresing Castillo saw the vine in the garden shake though there was no wind at all. A woman's voice was heard to say: "Fear not my child. Kiss the ground. Whatever I tell you to do, you must do. For fifteen consecutive days, come to visit me here in this spot. Eat some grass, my child."

The next day, September 13, Monday, again at five in the afternoon, the postulant returned to the place, knelt down and intended to say the Hail Mary. She has only recited until the phrase “Full of Grace” when again the vine moved. A beautiful Lady appeared, her hands clasped on her breast, a golden rosary hanging in her right hand, slightly stooping, her dress was simple and pure white held in the waist by a narrow cloth belt. Her feet were bare and resting on clouds about two feet above ground. Her face, indescribably beautiful, was radiant.

On September 14, Tuesday, the first shower of rose petals took place. Some nuns, awakening early in the morning, found fresh rose-petals of exceptional sweetness, strewn around their rooms or outside their quiet doors. Again at five in the afternoon, the Lady as if enfolding the postulant in a tender maternal embrace said “I wish this place to be blessed tomorrow”. ‘At what time Mother?’ asked Teresing. “Anytime your Mother prioress wants, my child. I forbid you to forget the incidents of these fifteen days”, the Lady said. Then she disappeared.

Meantime, Mother Prioress decided to consult His Excellency, the Most Reverend Alfredo Obviar, auxiliary bishop of Lipa and spiritual director of Carmel, on what to do with the alleged apparition of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The bishop instructed Mother Prioress to tell Postulant Teresing to demand from the Blessed Virgin some proof that the apparition was from heaven.

Days after the first shower of petals, total blindness afflicted the postulant. Mother Prioress heard a voice telling her that the only way Teresing’s blindness would be healed was for her to kiss the eyes of the postulant. Mother asked the bishop to be present at a face off with Teresing. So one day in the presence of Bishop Obviar, the Mother Prioress lifted the veil of Postulant Teresing and imparted a kiss in her eyes. Instantly the girl recovered her sight. Her blindness was cured. Bishop Obviar doubted no more that the apparitions were heavenly.

Here are some of the messages of the Lady to Teresing:

"I want a statue of mine to be placed here. I want you to describe me to your chaplain because I want it to be as you see me, and as big as the statue of Lourdes that is in the cloister. Tell Mother Prioress to have the rosary recited by the community here every afternoon during these days. Clean this part of the garden so that it will be a real place of prayer."

On September 26, Sunday, the last (15th) day of the apparitions, the Lady said: “My child, you must love and obey your mother. Tell the sisters to love and obey their superiors and not to forget the things I ask. I shall not ask bigger things from you as you expect, because you are my little ones. Do not forget to consecrate yourselves to me on October 7. Be very good, I am Mary, Mediatrix of All Grace. I shall always bless the community morning and evening.” Departing for the last time, the Blessed Virgin identified Herself as: “Mediatrix of All Grace.”

The Lipa phenomenon is often and principally associated with the shower of rose-petals. Such took place also on September 30, the fifty-first anniversary of the death of St’ Therese of the Child Jesus. Rose-petals were strewn in the cells of the monastery. Likewise on October 3, feast of St. Therese of the Child Jesus. During those times, the shower of rose-petals fell on the staircase. Most showers took place within the cloister. Later however they also fell outside the monastery at the sight of many visitors. On November 11, Mrs. Aurora Quezon, the wife of the late President of the Commonwealth, and her party witnessed such shower of roses at the monastery grounds. Bishop Alfredo Obviar himself stated that petals fell on his feet as he went out of the door of the nunnery:

“I was inside the parlor of the Carmelite monastery. The windows and doors were closed. When I was about to step out of the door, outside, several rose-petals fell on my feet, to my great surprise. I picked up some of them.”

The then Supreme Court Chief Justice Manuel Moran fervently remarked:

“The miracle of the shower of rose-petals at the Carmelites’ convent in Lipa City is not the work of man but of God. There can be no doubt about it. If I am not absolutely convinced, I would not waste my time coming to this place.”

Most petals bore images of Jesus or Mary or St. Joseph or one of the saints, most particularly, St. Therese of the Child Jesus.

The 1948 apparitions in Lipa highlighted the Blessed Virgin’s plea for humility, penance, prayers for priests and for the Holy Father. As in Lourdes and Fatima the Blessed Mother insisted on the need to pray the Rosary. Our Lady complained about the people losing faith. Teresita added that there was a secret for herself, another for the Carmelite convent in Lipa City and one for China.

The Negative Church Verdict

The veneration of Our Lady Mediatrix of all Grace was permitted by Bishop Verzosa. However on April 11, 1951 the Philippine church hierarchy issued 'The Verdict' in a document which read:

"We, the undersigned Archbishops and bishops, constituting for the purpose a special commission, having attentively examined and reviewed the evidence and testimonies collected in the course of repeated, long and careful investigations, have reached the unanimous conclusion and hereby officially declare the above-mentioned evidence and testimonies exclude any supernatural intervention in the reported extraordinary happenings –including the showers of petals– at the Carmel of Lipa."

The signatories were: Archbishop Gabriel Reyes of Manila, Bishop Cesar M. Guerrero of San Fernando, Bishop Mariano Madriaga of Lingayen, Bishop Rufino Santos, Administrator of Lipa, Bishop Vicente Reyes Auxiliary Bishop of Manila, and Bishop Juan Sison, Auxiliary Bishop of Nueva Segovia. The document was also signed 'concordat cum originali' by the Apostolic Nuncio, Archbishop Egidio Vagnozzi.

Bishop Rufino Santos, the apostolic administrator of the Diocese of Lipa, followed up such declaration with a decree that went this way:

Having been declared by the Special Commission composed of several members of the Philippine Hierarchy that, after long, repeated and careful investigations, the evidences and testimonies on the matter exclude any supernatural intervention in the reported extraordinary happenings –including the shower of petals—at the Carmel of Lipa, I, the undersigned Apostolic Administrator of Lipa Diocese, in keeping with the Decree-Statement of the said Episcopal Commission, BY THESE PRESENT LETTERS dispose and order:

1) No petals nor water should be given out to anyone;

2) The statue of Our Lady (actually in the church) should be retired from public veneration;

3) All out-sisters must be admitted within the enclosure for the time being, excepting Sr. Elizabeth, who shall remain outside to attend to the needs of the Community; and finally

4) All visits are suspended temporarily, no letters will be allowed, until final decision on the matter will come from The Holy See.

The decree was issued at the City of Lipa on April 12, 1951.

The Tragic Aftermath

Bishop Verzosa was forced to resign and sent back to his hometown in Vigan, Ilocos Sur in Northern Philippines. The Auxiliary Bishop, Most Reverend Alfredo Obviar was moved to Lucena, a newly erected diocese, where he served as a mere apostolic administrator for the next twenty-two years. In 1974 he was finally given full episcopal powers as the resident bishop of Lucena Diocese. On October 1, 1979, Feast of St. Therese of the Child Jesus, the bishop died a holy death, having declared earlier: "They can oblige me to keep silent; but they can never compel me to say it was not true."

In recent years more and more people go on Pilgrimage to his tomb in the Mother House of the Sisters' Congregation he founded in 1958, the Missionary Catechists of St. Therese. Numerous reports of miracles are ascribed to this so-termed 'saint of Holy Obedience'. Bishop Obviar's cause for beatification has been introduced and is progressing well.

On the other hand, the memory of Bishop Alfredo Versoza, buried in the Cathedral of Vigan and overlooked for four decades, is now the object of research. He too has been invoked for favors miraculously granted. His cause for possible beatification is being considered.

Mother Prioress and the other perpetually professed sisters, notably Sister Mary of St. Joseph, the sub-prioress, and Sr. Mary Anne, the infirmarian, were purposely separated and dispersed to other Carmels. They suffered and died also in the odor of sanctity.

Meanwhile all materials connected with the apparitions were ordered destroyed. Teresita's diary, as well as that of Mother Prioress, were burned. The statue was also destined for ruin, but the nuns quietly kept it away, saving it from

oblivion. The convent was sealed, and the nuns could talk to no one outside of the convent. These events confirm the Blessed Mother's warning that there would be persecution.

Teresita was subjected to investigation by the 'commission'. As far as she was concerned the investigating commission consisted only of Bishop Rufino Santos, Bishop Cesar Guerrero, Fr. Blas, OP, and another Dominican priest. Cardinal Santos was always kind to her but would get her any unholy hour and brought to Manila for investigation often times with little time to prepare. Finally, Ma Mére, the French prioress made to replace Mother Mary Cecilia of Jesus, tearfully advised Teresita to leave the convent on her own volition so that she could later be readmitted when she would be ready. She could not be admitted for profession because she failed to stay a full year in the novitiate. This was however due to her being often brought hastily to Manila for inquiry. If she chose to remain, the prioress will be forced to send her out depriving her of the possibility to reapply. She returned then to her parents. But, later, each time she would ask to return to the cloister, she would be required to have a medical clearance due to her health. Her health admittedly has never been satisfactory due to the traumatic experiences she endured during interrogations. At one point, because she refused to sign a declaration stating that the apparitions were a hoax, a priest-investigator threw the ash tray at her, fortunately missing her. No medical clearance was ever granted her. The story of the apparitions was buried for 40 years, though the faithful believed in silence and persisted in praying to the Mediatrix of All Grace.

Years After

Almost forty years after, on February 11, 1990, Reverend Father Lorenzo Maria Guerrero, SJ, nephew of Bishop Cesar Guerrero of San Fernando, executed an affidavit asserting:

"that while my uncle, Bishop Cesar Gerrero, was still alive, I heard from his lips that he signed the above Official Statement under duress,: and "that the said Bishop had expressed his personal belief in the fact of the apparitions of Our Lady Mediatrix of All Grace in the Carmelite Convent of Lipa during the year of 1948."

The late Bishop Godofredo Pedernal, who worked with Bishop Obviar for twenty-five years as Vicar General and Episcopal vicar, testified that, while

accompanying Bishop Obviar in the sixties to console his dying friends, Bishop Guerrero, Archbishop Cuenco and Archbishop Sison, he heard Bishop Obviar ask: "Why did you sign that declaration about the foolishness of the Lipa Carmel Sisters?" The three bishops would silently show their own rose petals and replied: "We were forced to sign."

Sometime in February 1990 a strange new phenomenon was reported in the Granja District of Lipa City. A white glowing outline of a female in prayer began allegedly to appear nightly on one of the leaves of a tall coconut tree. It was visible only in the evenings. Then on May 21, 1990, Sr. Alphonse pleaded on her deathbed that the Mediatrix statue be exposed again in the chapel at the Carmelite convent. Her request was granted the very next day. She died on that day. For the first time the statue was displayed after 40 years! On January 24, 1991, rose petals began to fall straight from the sky again at the Carmelite convent in Lipa City. A few days later, six children playing in the front garden of the monastery saw the statue of Our Lady of Mount Carmel at the monastery grounds come to life and shed tears.

Archbishop Mariano Gaviola granted the permission to display again the image of the Mediatrix of All Grace. The year after, he declared his personal conviction that the Lipa apparitions were worthy of belief. Miracles of physical and spiritual healing took place. Once more again there were reports of showers of rose-petals. Stories of marvelous happenings, as in the late forties, pile up. The faithful never really ceased visiting Carmel in spite of the 1951 decree. The number of pilgrims however swelled since the revival in the early nineties.

Archbishop Gaviola created a new commission headed by then auxiliary bishop now emeritus, Most Reverend Salvador Quizon and largely documentarily accomplished by Justice Hariet Demetriou. Documents from then surviving persons who experienced the events in the late forties as well as new evidences of wonders grew rapidly. Unfortunately, Archbishop Gaviola retired. Was he overwhelmed by sufferings due to what he did for the Blessed Virgin Mary? His successor did not do anything about the said phenomenon except asserting that the authorities of the early fifties could not have been less competent in their investigation than those fifty years after. That means that any recent investigations can never convincingly correct the conclusions done decades ago. The Gaviola commission ceased its inquiry.

Did Mary really appear in Lipa?

From the very start I, the Archbishop of Lipa since July 1994, had never put into doubt the truth of the so-called Marian happenings in Lipa. As a child I was brought there together with my other siblings by my parents. I have frequented the place since then. As a young seminarian, then priest and bishop, I would come to Lipa Carmel to willingly and trustingly entrust to Mary, my concerns, my whole life and all my activities, ignoring the controversies which had enveloped the events from the outset and which lingered thereafter. I have not personally met, nor known nor bothered about Teresing Castillo until years later as a newly ordained bishop.

The controversies surrounding the Lipa apparitions did not at all worry me as a young bishop. I could not fail to notice, in the meantime, how the events in Lipa have taken a new turn since I was a child. Lipa has gained the reputation of being Mary's privileged place. In fact people from all over do not hesitate to consider it as the Marian capital of the Philippines.

Things became more complicated for me upon my appointment as Lipa Archbishop in 1994. I realized I have become part of the controversy. The intricacies of the past that overflow into the present have upset me for the last more than four years. People expect much from me who am reputed to be a profoundly Marian bishop. Some even sort of pressure me to declare the authenticity of the Marian apparitions, so that when asked if I will now give official approval to the Lipa phenomenon, my getaway response is: "Archbishop Ramón Argüelles has long approved it; the present Lipa Archbishop however has not." Time and again I feel at fault for seemingly dodging the issue. Fellow Marians would prick my conscience by saying: "It is the Blessed Mother Who wants you in Lipa. And for a purpose." An easy way for me to steer clear of arguments is to state that regardless of the truth or non-truth of the 1948 events, the Mediatrix of All Grace remains a mystery tied up with and to a certain extent advanced by Lipa. Yet deep inside I sense that more is demanded of me.

Pilgrimage to Lipa never ceased. Every 12th of the month people will congregate at the Cathedral and make a penitential procession to the Carmelite Monastery of Mary, Mediatrix of All Grace, at three in the afternoon. Likewise on first Saturdays increasing crowds join the five o'clock dawn procession from the Cathedral to the monastery ending with the six o'clock morning mass. I often join

the procession and preside the Mass. Moreover for the five consecutive years, September 12, the so-called first apparition day, has been declared by government as a National Day of Prayer and Reconciliation. The consecration of the entire nation to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary during the afternoon Eucharist is the key point of the annual Pilgrimage to, what forty years ago Bishop Versoza called, Our Lady of Lipa.

The research silently goes on. More and more testimonies need yet to be examined to determine whether the events deserve to be believed in as they are already believed in by many. What more interesting testimony can be had than that coming from the supposed visionary. Sister Teresing is allowed by God to live long. She is already eighty-one. Those who love the Blessed Mother can reflect on her story with her. It is up to the reader or listener to judge whether Sister Teresing is credible or not, if her experience is subjective and if it deserves to be conveyed to numerous souls. But it is my opinion that we have to thank Sister Teresing for telling us the story of Mary in Lipa and for suffering with Bishop Versoza, Bishop Obviar and the other professed nuns of that time.

There is in fact some kind of parallelism in the statements of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Lourdes and in Lipa. Teresing was told by the Virgin: “For fifteen consecutive days, come to visit me here in this spot”. Bernadette on the other hand was told: “Will you do me the favor of coming here for fifteen days?” The Virgin revealed to Teresing: “My daughter, sufferings and trials will be with you until the end of your life”. To Bernadette: “I do not promise you happiness in this world, but in the next!” Again to Teresing: “My child, kiss the ground and eat a little grass.” To Bernadette: “Go on your knees, kiss the ground in penance for sinners” To Teresing: “I wish this place to be blessed tomorrow.” To Bernadette: “Go, tell the priests that I want that a Chapel be built here!” To Teresing: “I am Mary, Mediatrix of All Grace” To Bernadette: “Que soy era Immaculada Concepciou.”

Can the documents issued in April 1951 be considered a genuine document expressing the definitive stand of the official Church of that time regarding the Lipa apparitions? First, it cannot be considered a final document from the Catholic Hierarchy of the Philippines since only an Archbishop (Gabriel Reyes of Manila), a resident bishop (Cesar Guerrero of San Fernando), an apostolic administrator of the place at issue (Rufino Santos) and three other auxiliary bishops (Sison of Nueva

Caceres, Madriaga of Dagupan and Reyes of Manila) signed the document 'as Archbishops and bishops, constituting for the purpose a special commission'. Second, vis-à-vis the fervor of the many ordinary faithful, there is yet the so-called claim of many of the bishops that they believe in the miracles while those who signed claimed that they were under duress. Third, except for the above-mentioned documents, no record can be shown either by the Carmelite Generalate in Rome nor by the Nunciature as well as the Vatican archives themselves. Of course it is possible that the records of the fifties are not made available by Rome nor by the Nunciature for some reasons only they know. But for the sake of the Truth, and for the good of the faithful, such questions must be answered. Finally, as noted by the late Archbishop Mariano Gaviola, no document from Rome has, as of now, been issued us mentioned in the decree of then Apostolic Administrator Bishop Rufino Santos.

Did she really appear in Lipa?

Did Mary, Mediatrix of All Grace appear in Lipa? I as simply, Ramón C. Argüelles, will readily say, like many others in the Philippines and elsewhere in fact I will never ever regret saying this: "Yes, Mary, Mediatrix of All Grace, did appear in Lipa." It is not only in the fifties that most of the bishops believed in the Lipa Apparitions. Today, many bishops, surely led also by the simple faith of many faithful, believe that the Lipa events were not invented. God and Mary surely favored our land, especially the province of Batangas.

As Archbishop of Lipa, however, due to the unfortunate and confusing historical circumstances that may not be ignored, obviously I vacillate in making a clear-cut pronouncement. Certainly I am privately and silently doing, and I know I must officially initiate, a new inquiry. But no doubt, whatever be the outcome of any serious and thorough research the Archdiocese of Lipa, the City of Lipa or the whole Batangas Province will not become less a specially celebrated place where Mary is intensely honored, loved and sought. A final Church statement may be most desirable by a good number of devotees. But the majority of the faithful will not at all be affected by whatever position the official Church will take. They will go on believing that Mary is powerfully present to her people in this place.

Personally and officially it is my earnest prayer and wish that Mary had truly appeared before and will still reveal herself in Lipa, and even everywhere, to tell the whole world that She is indeed Mediatrix of All Grace. Her call to prayer, penance, return to her Son Jesus, to humility, simplicity and fidelity to God is even more pressing in today's world. Lipa is a blessed and marvelous site to hear and heed this maternal plea.

HOW CAN MARY BE "MEDIATRIX OF ALL GRACE"?

WHAT IS THE THEOLOGICAL/BIBLICAL BASIS FOR THIS TITLE OF OUR LADY

Archbishop Ramon C. Arguelles

Archbishop of Lipa

"All Grace", in Latin, "Tota Gracia", is Christ. Christ is "All Grace." Christ came to us through the Virgin Mary.

"The Gift", Eu Caris, who is Christ, came to us through the Virgin Mary. Therefore, the Virgin Mary is our Mediatrix with the "All Grace", the Source of All Graces, Jesus Christ. Consequently, she is also Mediatrix of All Graces brought to us by Christ, who is "Eu Caris", the gift of God to us.

We can deduce the truth from many biblical citations. We can start from the Book of Genesis (3:15) in the passage of the great promise: "I will put enmity between you and the Woman, your seed and her seed. She (or the Seed) shall crush your head." The Woman, together with her Son, is the end of the Evil One and conversely, the beginning of all blessings.

There are other citations related to this, like that of Isaiah, which foretold of the Virgin who will conceive and bear a Son whom she would call, "Emmanuel" – God with us. The "Emmanuel" is the Son of God who came from heaven through the Virgin, who is the Mediatrix of All Grace.

The truth of the doctrine can also be clearly seen in the story of the Incarnation or Annunciation. In her "Fiat", the Virgin accepted to collaborate with God in bringing about our salvation. God wanted the collaboration of the "Woman" in our salvation story – Mary, therefore, as active collaborator, is the rightful dispenser of the graces earned by Jesus' redeeming act.

Finally, the biblical passage of Mary at the foot of the Cross clearly highlights the truth of the doctrine. In Calvary, Jesus explicitly gave her the mediating role in

His words, “Woman, behold your Son. Son, behold your Mother”. John, representing all humanity, was entrusted to Mary, our Mediatrix.

Is the title “Mediatrix of All Grace” commonly used in the Church? Have there been past precedent of its usage – past popes using it, saints, etc?

The title of Mediatrix has been attributed to Our Lady since the 6th century in the Eastern Church, and since the 9th century in the West. It is very clearly explained in the dogmatic constitution of the Church.

A REFELCTION ON THE ROLE OF MARY IN EVANGELIZATION

Archbishop Ramon Arguelles, D.D.,
Archdiocese of Lipa

(Talk given during the Asia Oceania Mariological Conference (AOMC) September 12 -16, 2009, Lipa, Philippines)

"Mary set out at that time and went as quickly as she could into the hill country to a town in Judah" (Lk 1:39). This is the Jerusalem Bible rendering of the sentence which is the focus of our present reflection. "At that time" refers to when 'the angel left her' (v. 38b). The prior encounter obviously refers to the dialogue between Mary of Nazareth and the angel. The latter announced to her that she would give birth to "the Son of the Most High" (v. 32). Her consent, "You see before you the Lord's servant, let it happen to me as you have said" (v. 38a), heralded one of the two fundamental mysteries of the Christian faith: "The Word became flesh, he lived among us" (John 1:14a). One fundamental mystery is the Incarnation: The Son of God became man. Just to make the picture complete, the other fundamental mystery of the Christian faith is the Glorification: In Christ glorified Humanity enters the Divine Glory. When the angel left Mary, the true sender remains with her. "As quickly as she could" indicates that Mary immediately acting upon the work of God which She has become an important part of. Remember that God is made flesh in her womb. Without the slightest hesitation Mary set off on her singular role: to bring Christ to the world, to all humanity, to all of us. In truth it is Christ, the Word made flesh, Who cannot be inactive. He is God even in the womb of His human Mother. It is important to emphasize from the very start that Mary and Jesus can never be separated. Her actions are His. She carries out this task unceasingly, up to our own days.

Let me say with conviction: This gathering is very much an evidence of the vital role of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the proclamation of the Word of God, better known as EVANGELIZATION, Jesus and Mary at work in us and with us.

Manila, January 1995, during the Sixth Plenary Assembly of FABC, Pope John Paul II declared, "just as in the first millennium the Cross was planted on the soil of Europe and in the second on that of the Americas and Africa, we can pray

that in the Third Christian Millennium a great harvest of faith will be reaped in this vast and vital continent". ECCLESIA IN ASIA echoed this statement affirming that 'It was in fact in Asia that God revealed and fulfilled his saving purpose from the beginning' (Ecclesia in Asia #1).

From the twelfth to the sixteenth of September this year, the First Asia Oceania Mariological Conference was held in the Philippines. It started in the Archdiocese of Lipa, since already for the sixth consecutive year (that means, since I became the archbishop of Lipa) September 12 was declared the National Pilgrimage Day to Lipa. It is the Day of Prayer for Peace in the World and for the Sanctification of the Clergy. The date, September 12th, is believed to be the first of the apparitions of Mary Mediatrix of All Grace at the Carmel Monastery in Lipa. Since 1948 the devotees of the Blessed Mother never cease coming to pray with her especially on First Saturdays and every twelfth day of the month. For the first time, due to the presence of the delegates to the First Asia Oceania Mariological Conference coming from several Asian and Oceanian countries, September 12 became an international gathering.

The unique September 2009 Marian assembly held in the Philippines is not very different from our present assembly here in Jakarta. Both show that the above statements from the pope and from the Asian bishops are far from being ignored. In fact these Marian conferences do take place precisely because of those prophetic words. The Pope who was destined to lead the Church into the Third Millennium with the optimism of the advent of a new springtime of Christianity and a renewed Evangelization thrust, as if posthumously challenges us to confront the mystery 'why the Savior of the world, born in Asia, has until now remained largely unknown to the people of the continent' (ibid. #2). This coming together generally of laymen and laywomen of Asia, and representing families, like many similar initiatives, signals the fulfillment of the Church's millennium dream. Most of all, the bishops of this region in unanimity with the late Holy Father were far from being mistaken in entrusting Asia to Mary addressing her with the new, fitting and beautiful title 'Star of the Third Millennium Evangelization'. This meeting in truth has the precise goal of reflecting on Mary and Her Role in the Third Millennium Evangelization in ASIA and of course its impact on Asian Christians.

This assembly of lay people of our hemisphere is definitely no trifling matter. As we reflect on Mary's role in the evangelization of this part of the planet, we should aim to reach out to counterparts from different countries of this continent foretold by the late Holy Father and the bishops of Asia more than a decade ago as the focal point of evangelization of the third millennium. Obviously the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Star of the Third Millennium Evangelization, cannot be a mere bystander in this important effort in her home continent. The Archdiocese of Lipa feels very strongly this involvement of Mary in the Third Millennium Evangelization task.

The Archdiocese of Lipa which I shepherd since July 2004 has the distinct honor of celebrating this year its centenary as a local Church. The local Church of Lipa was founded on April 10, 1910 by Pope St. Pius X, known in the world as Giuseppe Sarto. We will have a year long Jubilee celebration from April 10, 2010 to April 10, 2011 specially blessed by the present Holy Father, Benedict XVI, known in the world as Josef Ratzinger, who endowed twenty-one Churches in the Archdiocese the privilege of being special places of Pilgrimage to gain the plenary indulgences. The Archdiocese of Lipa is under the patronage of St Joseph, beloved Spouse of the Virgin Mary, Foster-Father of the Son of God made man and Protector of the Universal Church. At the start, the Diocese of Lipa comprised almost the whole Southern Tagalog region. This large area in the last almost hundred years has given birth to seven other ecclesiastical territories each with its own bishop. In 1972 the Diocese of Lipa was elevated into a Metropolitan See. Presently the Archdiocese covers only the entire province of Batangas with its 2.3 million inhabitants, ninety-five per cent of which declare themselves Catholics.

This province and archdiocese has progressively gained the reputation of being a deeply Marian area. In celebrating the centennial as a local Church (we have made a three year intense spiritual preparation for this), we, like the whole Church at the dawn of the new millennium inspired by the late Pope John Paul II, look forward to a springtime of faith, a renewed thrust in Evangelization. We perceive in the very intense Marian character of our Jubilee as a local Church a manifestation of a very vital missionary obligation.

The missionary character of our local Church is shaped, in the past and in our yearlong Jubilee, by two important Marian phenomena. Among the more frequented Marian sites in the Archdiocese of Lipa is the more than four hundred year old Shrine of Our Lady of Caysasay. Local tradition recounts the discovery of the image of the Blessed Mother by a local fisherman who fished the small statue out of the Pansipit River. This is the river connecting Taal Lake with the China Sea. For a long time in the past this lake served as a safe haven for sea vessels threatened by perilous climate conditions in the high seas. Pre-hispanic Philippines saw the area visited by both merchants and prowlers mostly from the Chinese mainland and its surroundings. Right from the outset however the Spanish missionaries recognized the image as that of the Immaculate Conception. It came to be revered in the area under the title Our Lady of Caysasay. To the amazement of many, in recent decades among the frequent visitors are Chinese pilgrims, not excluding several non-Christians.

When asked why they like to come to the Our Lady of Caysasay Shrine these Chinese pilgrims reply that they were told my their MA-CHO that she is the one revered in Labac, Taal. MA-CHO instructed them to visit her there. MA-CHO is the goddess of the sea revered especially along the South China Sea. It is after her that the world-renowned tourist destination Macau is named. In that place as well as in many places nearby, one finds many of her revered gigantic shrines. Can MA-CHO, the goddess of the sea, be really the one referred to as STELLA MARIS?

In another place in the Philippines, north of Manila, in the mountains of Zambales, people say that the indigenous people called Aetas revered an image called Ina Poong Bato (Mother, Stone Image) long before Christianity came to the Philippines. At the advent of Spanish rule, the missionaries who reached the place identified her as the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Last September, 2008, in celebrating the hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the apparitions in Lourdes, the 52nd International Marian Congress was held in Lourdes. One of the speakers in that gathering was the rector of the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico. When the Indigenous people of Mexico saw the picture of the Holy Mother in the tilma of San Juan Diego, they quickly recognized marks of their goddess of goodness in the symbols embellishing the portrait. They at once acknowledged her as one of their deities. Moreover, according to the rector,

the Blessed Virgin intimated to the natives of the place: “I am not a goddess. But I am greater than all your goddesses, because I am the Mother of God.”

Can we ignore the fact that from the mountain of Tepeyac the evangelization of the whole Americas started? By the way, Our Lady of Guadalupe, whom we feted yesterday, is known as ‘La patrona de las Americas y de las Islas Filipinas’. She is the symbol of the successful evangelization of the whole American Continent. That evengelization even reached our shores for a reason that we begin slowly to recognize.

Is the Blessed Mother revered in Taal, like Our Lady of Guadalupe for the Americas, an indication that the Evangelization of Asia is already in process? Is Our Lady of Caysasay really the Ma-Cho who anounces to the Asians “I am no goddess. But I am greater than all your goddesses because I am the Mother of God”. Is Mary, Ma-Cho for the Chinese folks, beginning to make herself known four centuries after she was discovered by fishermen in the Pansipit River? Has Mary actually initiated in earnest the Evangelization of this great continent? Our presence around Mary in this city can be a dazzling indicator of something expected of the Church in the Third Millennium where we here in Asia are without doubt involved in.

The Archdiocese of Lipa that feels being summoned to a greater missionary undertaking is blessed with a more recent Marian phenomenon. In Lipa people often come and gather around Mary, Mediatrix of All Grace, believed by many to have appeared in the monastery of Carmel in the late forties in the aftermath of the destructive war. Controversies surrounded the so-called apparition in the beginning. Nonetheless popular devotion and the belief in Mary’s being the Mediatrix of All Grace never waned in the last six decades. On the contrary the Marian attachment continues to grow.

The Church has always acknowledged the unique role of the Blessed Mother as the one through whom Grace itself, that means the Lord Jesus, the gift from heaven (eu charis), came into this world. Most striking in the alleged 1948 apparition in Lipa Carmel was the Blessed Mother’s introducing herself as MEDIATRIX OF ALL GRACE. Furthermore, Blessed Mother asked God’s people to pray for the conversion of China. In Fatima Our Lady requested prayers for the conversion of Russia. She addressed the children who had no idea what nor where

Russia was. Not many in 1917 knew what was then happening in Russia and what was going to happen thereafter involving principally Russia. But the Blessed Mother was already pleading for prayers for the conversion of Russia which would still create so much turmoil until nearly the end of the century. In 1948 an undeclared war was being waged between communist China and the free world. Was the Blessed Mother, that early, expressing a wish for prayers for a nation which six decades later looms as a country that will impact the world in the years ahead? Or was the Blessed Mother thinking of an evangelization course that involves a huge people beginning to discover, with the rest of the continent, the Son of One, Whom so far they only recognize as their goddess of the sea?

There are clear indications that indeed the Blessed Mother is very clearly involved in the Third Millennium Evangelization. After all She is the greatest and principal bearer of the Good News to all, at all times and places. Jesus, Her Son, is the Good News Asians should come to know and accept. The Blessed Virgin Mary, known in Taal as Our Lady of Caysasay, by the Chinese people as MA-CHO, in Lipa as Our Lady MEDIATRIX of All Grace, is beyond doubt very active in this vast continent.

The question that remains to be faced is "How must this evangelization be accomplished in the Third Millennium?" I venture a deeply Marian response. If in the first millennium evangelization was achieved in a confrontational way (after all the new way of Christ is offered as the alternative to the prevailing decadent cultures of the early Christian centuries which explains the lure of martyrdom of the time), and if the second millennium saw evangelization ride the waves of conquest, the third millennium evangelization will be truer to its nature and can be accomplished through dialogue. This is where the Blessed Mother excels and certainly manifests herself as the greatest model and guide. That is why this is a Marian response. Evangelization through dialogue is the truly Marian Way of evangelizing.

The Good News resulted primarily from dialogue. The dialogue started from heaven with God wanting to communicate with the world. The dialogue took place in time in the history of Israel and achieved its highest point in the prayer of Mary. The dialogue between the angel and Mary was the dramatic portrayal of the ceaseless dialogue between God and humanity. God announces the Good News in

the angelic words: Hail Full of Grace; the Lord is with you! The dialogue between Mary and Elisabeth describes another portrayal of the active and powerful exchange involving the silent but lively interaction in the womb of both exceptional mothers, the Word of God barely a day in the virginal womb and the 'voice … in the desert' (Mt 3:3a) six months in an old lady's womb: "As soon as Elisabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leapt in her womb" (Lk 1:41).

The dialogue in the womb was articulated by the exceptional mothers. Mary in particular announced the Good News: "He … raised high the lowly. He has filled the starving with good things … He has come to the help of … his servant" (Lk 1:52b-53a, 54a).

Mary has always been the perfect realization of the human-divine dialogue. She personifies not only Israel of old and the new Israel in the dialogue with God. She personifies humanity as a whole, the humanity that accepts the Good News. In her humanity and all creation responds to God's invitation with the words: "You see before you the Lord's servant, let it happen to me as you have said" (v. 38a).

The evangelization through dialogue can best be realized in Asia. The dialogue that reached its height in the Incarnation took place in Asia. In this continent the dialogue evidently did not start only with the history of Israel. The Church acknowledges the presence of the Holy Spirit even in the ancient cultural and religious traditions of Asia. It is good to understand that the evangelization through dialogue (not through confrontation nor through conquest) is the only way Asia will discover the whole truth, the Good News: Full of Grace, the Lord is with You. Mary is surely for Asia the model of Evangelization through Dialogue. This dialogue needed in the Asian context seems to explain why MAT-SU seems to be the forerunner, not that they are two persons, but the same persons recognized in different times.

What are some characteristics of such dialogue? Looking at the person of Mary, her role as universal Mother means so much for all Asian cultures. This is a dialogue of love that motherhood in the Asian context perfectly illustrates. The people of Asia more than others will, can and should engage in the dialogue of love. This is something deeply asian and easily understood by the Asian soul. The dialogue of love is first learned and lived in the family. The role of Mary, guided by the divine Spirit, is to be the soul of the family of Nazareth, the soul of every

family, the soul of God's family. Mary as the great evangelizer is the greatest guarantee of true family renewal. Secondly in Dialogue Mary was obviously very much a listener. Many times Mary is described as the one who listens to God's word and keeps it in her heart. The dialogue Asia can learn from her is therefore the dialogue of silence of the heart. Mary's silence has a very strong effect. Asia is no foreigner to silence. Many seek from ancient religions of Asia the atmosphere of prayer that solitude and silence brings. A third quality of dialogue that Mary discloses, which swiftly finds a very special place in the Asian soul is simplicity. Evangelization as dialogue sees in Mary the model of simplicity and humility. If Asia will discover the Good News, just like in the humility of Nazareth the proclamation must be through the simplicity and humility that characterize the atmosphere from both sides of the dialoguing parties in the encounter in Nazareth: the humble God descended on the womb of the humble virgin.

Mary, the Star of the Third Millennium Evangelization, is truly the forerunner of Evangelization as dialogue. We need Mary and her Evangelical style to succeed in the Evangelization of Asia. With the late Pope John Paul II and the bishops of Asia we should not hesitate to pray often:

O HOLY MARY, DAUGHTER OF THE MOST HIGH GOD, VIRGIN MOTHER OF THE SAVIOUR AND MOTHER OF US ALL, LOOK TENDERLY UPON THE CHURCH OF YOUR SON, PLANTED ON ASIAN SOIL. BE HER GUIDE AND MODEL AS SHE CONTINUES YOUR SON'S MISSION OF LOVE AND SERVICE IN ASIA. YOU FULLY AND FREELY ACCDEPTED THE FATHER'S CALL TO BE THE MOTHER OF GOD; TEACH US TO EMPTY OUR HEARTS OF ALL THAT IS NOT OF GOD, THAT WE TOO MAY BE FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT FROM ON HIGH. YOU PONDERED THE MYSTERIES OF GOD'S WILL IN THE SILENCE OF YOUR HEART; HELP US ON OUR JOURNEY TO DISCERN THE SIGNS OF GOD'S POWERFUL HAND. YOU WENT QUICKLY TO VISIT ELIZABETH AND HELP HER IN HER DAYS OF WAITING; OBTAIN FOR US THE SAME SPIRIT OF ZEAL AND SERVICE IN OUR EVANGELIZING TASK.

YOU SANG THE PRAISES OF THE LORD; LEAD US IN JOYFUL PROCLAMATION OF FAITH IN CHRIST OUR SAVIOR. YOU HAD THE COMPASSION OF THE NEEDY AND SPOKE TO YOUR SON ON THEIR

BEHALF; TEACH US NEVER TO FEAR TO SPEAK OF THE WORLD TO JESUS AND OF JESUS TO THE WORLD. YOU STOOD AT THE FOOT OF THE CROSS AS YOUR SON BREATHED HIS LAST; BE WITH US AS WE SEEK TO BE ONE IN SPIRIT AND SERVICE WITH ALL WHO SUFFER. YOU PRAYED WITH THE DISCIPLES IN THE UPPER ROOM; HELP US TO WAIT UPON THE SPIRIT AND TO GO WHEREVER HE LEADS US. PROTECT THE CHURCH FROM ALL THE POWERS THAT THREATEN HER.

HELP HER TO BE A TRUE IMAGE OF THE MOST HOLY TRINITY. PRAY THAT THROUGH THE CHURCH'S LOVE AND SERVICE ALL THE PEOPLES OF ASIA MAY COME TO KNOW YOUR SON JESUS CHRIST, THE ONLY SAVIOR OF THE WORLD, AND SO TASTE THE JOY OF LIFE IN ALL ITS FULLNESS. O MARY, MOTHER OF THE NEW CREATION AND MOTHER OF ASIA, PRAY FOR US, YOUR CHILDREN, NOW AND ALWAYS! AMEN.

THE RATIONALE OF MARIAN DEVOTION

The Church in the Philippines has always been characterized as “Pueblo Amante de Maria” - a people in Love with Mary. The Catholic Bishop's Conference of the Philippines has underlined this “Pueblo Amante de Maria” as “the outstanding characteristic of the Church in the Philippines” [cf. CBCP Pastoral Letter 'Ang Mahal na Birhen', AMB (1974)", Second Plenary Council of the Philippines, PCP-II (1991), Catechism for Filipino Catholics, CFC (1997).]

The Pastoral Letter 'Ang Mahal na Birhen' (1974) emphasizes that deep devotion to the Mother of God has been the strongest force keeping our faith alive (cf. AMB 67). Mary has been and remains the central inspiring force in bringing about a deeper evangelization of the masses of our people. Devotion to Mary is "the safeguard for the preservation of our Catholic Faith, and the principle of deeper and fuller evangelization" (AMB 72-73)

The Second Plenary Council of the Philippines (1991) pointed to "Mary as the Model of Discipleship," as the "Church of the Philippines, as a "pueblo amante e Maria" - "a people in love with Mary" - will always to continue to seek her intercession and learn from her way of life what we need to be as a community of disciples" (PCP-II, 153)

The Catechism for Filipino Catholics (1997) tells us of the role of "the Blessed Virgin Mary in the Faith- Journey of the Filipino Catholics". The outstanding characteristic of the Church in the Philippines is to be a "Pueblo amante de Maria" - a people in love with Mary (CFC 45)

The typically "Filipino" approach to Christ, therefore, is with and through Mary (CFC 46). Devotion to Mary has always been intimately intertwined with Christ

Marian Devotion and pity seem co-natural t us Filipinos (CFC 47) Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, Ang Mahal na Birhen, has greatly helped many simple Filipinos to remain Catholics (CFC 48)

The Mariological Society of the Philippines will be harnessing to channel our Marian Devotion towards renewal of Christian life, individually and collectively, as

nation, and thus live our call to be witness and bearers of our faith to the while of Asia and probably the rest of the entire world.

Significance of the Blessed Mother's Title at Lipa

The Apparition at Lipa pronounced her title to be Mediatrix of All Grace while the title of the liturgical feast instituted by Benedict XV in January 21, 1921 is Mediatrix of all graces. The difference of the feast being in the plural and that of the title in Lipa being in the singular is readily apparent.

Teresita Castillo, the seer of Lipa, affirms that "ALL GRACE" refers to Jesus. Since grace is defined as a participation in the divine nature it is theologically correct to refer to the source, the divinity itself as "All Grace". Mary, a finite being, is full of the grace she received, as a glass is full by the water poured into it. Since the fullness of the divinity is in Jesus, Mary is therefore the Mediatrix of Jesus, the Mediatrix of All Grace

With this title from Our Lady of Lipa the focus is not so much on the benefits as on the Benefactor Himself. Not so much as bringing us the tremendous and necessary graces of salvation but giving us the Savior Himself.

Two millennia ago, she gave Christ in the flesh to the world. When God the Father gave Jesus to Mary, the Blessed Mother received all of Jesus and because of her divine maternity only Mary could give Jesus to the world. In the physical order it can be seen that Mary the Mediatrix mediates Christ the One Mediator to men by incarnating the Redeemer in her womb and giving birth to Him in the flesh.

In both the physical order and in the spiritual order Mary is indeed the Mediatrix of "All Grace" who is no one else but Jesus Christ. If she can give us the one who is "All Grace" she can surely and readily give us all His graces. Such is the understanding we derive from the formulation "Mediatrix of All Grace" which is not gained from the title "Mediatrix of all graces." Mary mediates nothing else and nobody else but the Person of God Himself. By being Mediatrix of all graces all those necessary graces to lead upright lives are communicated to us so that Christ is formed in us.

St. Paul speaks of forming Christ among his followers (Galatians 4:19). Our priests are like St. Paul in that they seek to form Christ among us, their spiritual

children. And how is Christ spiritually formed among Christians? By grace and by grace alone.

If St. Paul then can claim that he forms Christ among his flock, can she who is full of grace not be capable of what St. Paul has done?

We then see a perfect alignment between the proposed dogma of universal Marian mediation using the term "All Grace" which points to Christ being formed in us and the teaching of the Church that we form the Mystical Body of Christ.

Now to declare that she is Mediatrix of All Grace is to necessarily imply that she is at the same time Mediatrix of all graces. To be able to give the Mediator is to be capable of giving the graces He has. On the other hand it does not necessarily follow that if she is Mediatrix of all graces she is also Mediatrix of All Grace.

If the phrase "Mediatrix of All Grace" is employed in defining the dogma, it will encapsulate the thought that through Mary we are given both the Source of grace itself and all graces that He deigns to grant us.

Theologians when they speak of the universal mediation of Mary invariably deal with graces, gifts and benefits rather than on the Giver of these spiritual blessings. By invoking her as Mediatrix of all graces we tend to see the means while when we call on her as Mediatrix of All Grace we are led to see the end for which these very graces are given to us.

Lipa then appears to be a theological prompting from Heaven on what the title and therefore what the actual words to be employed should be when the dogma of the Mediatrix is defined. Perhaps it is heaven's design that Lipa's formulation prevail for it is eminently and thoroughly Christocentric: It recognizes Mary's mediation of the God-Man in the physical order in the past and Her continuing mediation to mankind of Christ in the spiritual order till the end of time.

Thus, when the dogma that Mary is the Mediatrix of All Grace is finally pronounced the correspondence between He who is All Grace (Christ) and she who is full of grace (Mary) is easily seen. The dogma understood properly from the data of Lipa is merely a recognition of Mary replicating her role in the spiritual order what she accomplished in the physical order 2,000 years ago.

ST. LOUIS DE MONFORT, CARDINAL MERCIER AND MARY, MEDIATRIX OF ALL GRACE

AFTER the Liturgical reform of Vatican II, every 31st of May we celebrate the Feast of the Visitation of Our Lady to her cousin, St. Elizabeth. But before that, it was an almost universal celebration that every 31st of May was the Feast of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mediatrix of All Graces (yes, in the plural which is quite different from the column title which is in the singular).

It was the Belgian Cardinal Désiré Joseph Mercier who started the campaign in the early part of the 20th century to have the title of Our Lady as Mediatrix of All Graces to be proclaimed as a dogma of faith. Later he would make that "twin" campaign for the canonization of then Blessed Louis Marie Grignon de Montfort side-by-side with the campaign for the title of Our Lady as Mediatrix of All Graces. In fact, in his discernment, the proclamation of this Marian dogma will be achieved through the canonization of St. Louis.

Cardinal Mercier died in 1926. By that time, neither was St. Louis canonized nor the particular Marian title defined as dogma of Faith. He had that consolation, however, that Pope Benedict XV granted in 1921 to the whole of Belgium an Office and Mass of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mediatrix of All Graces. This Office and Mass were extended by the Holy See to many other dioceses and religious institutes, so that the commemoration became almost universal.

It is told that the definition of the Marian dogma never occurred because of objections of many theologians. Whatever the reason was, the Church did not see it opportune that time.

Finally, in 1947 Louis Marie Grignon de Montfort was canonized. He was one of the outstanding devotees of Our Lady and through his many writings, particularly the book, True Devotion to Mary, he laid out his particular Marian spirituality of total consecration to Mary as her slave.

The word slavery may sound too offending to our contemporary ears. And yet, we can view it in a very positive manner. Slaves, during olden times, were considered commodities and properties of their owners. In a sense, being slaves of Mary means to be owned by her, but neither as a commodity nor a property but instead voluntarily we declare ourselves to be a possession of Our Lady.

A possession that she will safeguard and protect from all harm and danger; a possession that she will treasure and cherish.

The slaves as well, in olden times, were chained. They were chained so that they could not go far from their owners. In the spiritual sense, through the Total Consecration to Mary, we freely "chain" ourselves to her so that neither sin nor evil could make us detached or run away from her.

Months after the canonization of St. Louis came the reported apparitions of Our Lady in the Carmelite Monastery of Lipa in 1948. And yes, believe it or not, in those apparitions, Our Lady identified herself as Mary, Mediatrix of All-Grace (and yes it was in the singular). Our Lady even explained why it was in the singular form All-Grace, she said that such word refers to Christ who is the source of every and all graces.

In those same apparitions, Our Lady requested the Carmelite nuns to consecrate themselves to her as her slaves following the devotional manner enunciated by St. Louis Marie Grignon de Montfort.

Were all these coincidences? Most certainly not. We can safely assume these are the fruits of the prayers and efforts of Cardinal Mercier and many others who truly believed in the title of Mary as Mediatrix of All-Grace. And particularly, it crosses our mind that it was Cardinal Mercier who decades before already prayed for the canonization of St. Louis and through that canonization the approval of the title of Mary as Mediatrix of All-Grace.

We are told that Cardinal Mercier in his death bed repeated over and over again, Mary Mediatrix, Mary Mediatrix.

Now, that we are fast approaching May 31 and end of the Marian month of May, we turn to Our Lady yet again in a very special manner under that very special title, Mediatrix of All-Grace. Monstra Te esse Matrem, we sing in the Ave Maris Stella, show unto us that you are our Mother.

May Our Lady indeed come to intercede for all of us, but especially come to the aid of our families whose sanctity and dignity are again facing an onslaught of attacks from many fronts.

Monstra Te esse Matrem! Ave Maria. Ad Jesum per Mariam

MARY, MEDIATRIX OF ALL GRACE

Isahel Alfonso

Mary's mediation depends on the supreme mediatorship of Christ, while Christ is the redemptive mediator Mary along His side is the mediator of God's grace and its dispensatrix to the people of God.[2]To avoid confusions we have to differentiate the mediatorship of Christ from Mary.

Christ is our redemptive mediator wherein he is the "go between" between the people and God. Through Christ mediation we received the gift of salvation by redeeming us from the grasp of Hell. While Mary's mediatorship she is the "go between" between God to mankind because through her God has entered the history of mankind by conceiving God's only begotten Son.

As the starting point for explaining this majestic truth we must look back to the exposition of Pope Leo XIII regarding the doctrine that Mary is truly the Mediatrix of all graces.[3]According to the Pope the treasure of heaven can only be dispense through the hands of Mary, without Mary no grace will be mediated to the people of God. Through Eve's influence on Adam, sin was mediated to the world, and through the influence of Mary's obedience grace was mediated to the world.

Christ is the grace of God in which through the Virgin birth Christ was mediated to man for his salvation. The Church is the body of Christ[4], and like the human body the head provides the necessary impulses to make the other organ functions and all this impulses before going into different organs must pass through the neck, likewise Christ is the head in which all the grace originated from him and Mary is the neck wherein all the graces must pass through her in order to be

[2] The guardian of our peace and the dispensatrix of heavenly graces. Pope Leo XIII, Supremi apostolatus (1883)

[3] With equal truth can it be affirmed that, by the will of God, nothing of the immense treasure of every grace which the Lord has accumulated, comes to us except through Mary…. How great are the wisdom and mercy revealed in this design of God…. Mary is our glory intermediary; she is the powerful Mother of the omnipotent God…. This design of such dear mercy realized by God in Mary and confirmed by the testament of Christ (Jn. 19:26 27), was understood from the beginning and accepted with the utmost joy by the holy Apostles and the earliest believers. It was also the belief and teaching of the venerable Fathers of the Church. All the Christian peoples of every age accepted it unanimously. . . There is no other reason for this than a divine faith. Octobri mense (1891)

[4] Eph.1:22

distributed into different parts of the Church. In the letter to the Hebrews[5] it basically tells as that children share with the parents his flesh and blood likewise it can be said that the very flesh and blood of Christ is the very flesh and blood of Mary in a more perfect way than those of ordinary people.[6]
When Christ was hanging on the cross the flesh and blood of Christ is also a partition of the very flesh and blood of Mary, after the piercing of the side of Christ blood and water immediately flowed out.[7] The blood and water symbolizes the fountain of grace that we obtain through the Sacraments, the water symbolized the Sacrament of Initiation or Baptism the beginning of our spiritual life through the grace of baptism and the blood symbolized the Eucharist the life and summit of the church.[8]

In the context of Mary's role in the salvation of mankind it can be said that the blood and water that flowed from the side of Christ also flowed through Mary since the very flesh and very blood of Christ and Mary is the same. Without Mary's obedience to the will of the Father grace can never be dispense to mankind since God choose the flesh and blood of Mary as the medium to where grace will be dispensed through the sacrificial act of Christ to all those who need it. Mary is not the source of this grace, Christ alone is the source of grace Mary simply is the dispensatrix of the grace.
The belief in Mary as the Mediatrix of graces is not a new revelation it is already in the mind of the Church more than 700 years ago. Antipater of Bostra one of the council Fathers of the council of Ephesus called Mary the Mediatrix for mankind.[9] St. Bernard of Clairvaux has clearly in short and brief explanation the role of Mary

[5] Since then the children are sharers in flesh and blood, he also himself in like manner partook of the same; that through death he might bring to nought him that had the power of death, that is, the devil. Hebrews 2:14
[6] A peron's genetic make up is compose of 50% from the father and 50% from the mother, while Christ genetic make up is 100% of the flesh and blood of Mary. Hence the body and the blood that Christ offered to the cross is also a partition of the blood and flesh of Mary.
[7] But one of the soldiers with a spear opened his side: and immediately there came out blood and water. John 19:34
[8] For water and blood flowed forth, the one to cleanse, the other to redeem;" and as S. Cyril and Chrysostom say, that the water signifies baptism, which is the first beginning, of the Church and the other sacraments, and the blood represents the Eucharist, which is the end and completion of the sacraments, to which they all refer as to their beginning and their end. Whence S. Augustine says (in loc.), that all sacraments flowed forth from the side of Christ, in mystery, as I said. His words are, "It is not said that he 'struck' or 'wounded,' but that he 'opened' the side of Christ, that the door of life might thus, as it were, be opened, from whence the sacraments of the Church flowed forth, without which there is no entrance to true life." And S. Chrysostom. "Because the sacred mysteries take their rise from thence, when thou approachest the awful Chalice, thou shouldest approach it as if thou wert about to drink from the very side of Christ;" and the reason is, as S. Chrysostom and Theophylact say, "The Church exists and consists by means of the sacraments." For it is born by Baptism, strengthened by Confirmation, fed and perfected by the Eucharist, healed by Penance, fortified by Extreme Unction, governed by Holy Orders, and continued and extended by Matrimony. The Great Biblical Commentary of Cornelius Lapide
[9]] Hail, you who acceptably intercede as a Mediatrix for mankind." (In S. Joannem Bapt., PG, 1772C)

as the Mediatrix of all grace that no grace will be dispense without passing through the hands of Mary.[10] St. Albert the Great called Mary as the gate of heaven since all grace will have to pass through her.[11] The doctrine that Mary is the Mediatrix of all grace can be summed up with the words of St. Pope Pius X in his encyclical Ad Diem Illum Laetissimum the pope said "by this companionship in sorrow and suffering already mentioned between the Mother and the Son, it has been allowed to the august Virgin to be the most powerful mediatrix and advocate of the whole world with her Divine Son." Sadly not everyone accepted this truth there are some who opposed it especially the Protestants, according to them Mary cannot be the Mediatrix since Christ alone is the mediator between man and God.[12]If they are correct with their understanding of 1 Timothy 2:5 then it follows that the Church should reject this teaching.

However they have misread the implication of the passage in its original Greek context. "one mediator" in Greek is "εις μεσιτης" (heis mesitēs)[13], the Greek word "heis" means "one, first or primary"[14] this Pauline epistle emphasizes Christ's transcendence as a mediator, through the unique value of His redemptive death.[15]If Paul meant in 1 Timothy 2:5 that Christ is the sole and only mediator then he could have used the Greek word "monos" which means alone, sole and only. Clearly there is no contradiction in the Pauline epistle with the doctrine that Mary is the Mediatrix of all grace.

[10] God Has willed that we should have nothing which would not pass through the hands of Mary." (Hom. III in vig. nativit., n. 10, PL 183, 100)

[11] "The Blessed Virgin is very properly called 'gate of heaven,' for every created or uncreated grace that ever came or will ever come into this world came through her. Mariale 147

[12] This teaching is contrary to the explicit teaching of Scripture. We read in 1 Timothy 2:5 "There is one God and one mediator between God andmen, the man Christ. The Truth Encounter, pp. 142, Anthony Pezzota

[13] Textus Receptus Greek New Testament

[14] Strong's Hebrew and Greek Dictionaries

[15] Theotokos, A Theological Encyclopedia of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Dublin, 1982, p. 238. O'Carroll, C.S.Sp

MARY MEDIATRIX BY HER COOPERATION IN THE SACRIFICE OF THE CROSS

During the entire course of her earthly life, the Blessed Virgin cooperated in the sacrifice of her Son. First of all, the free consent that she gave on Annunciation day was necessary for the accomplishment of the mystery of the Incarnation, as if, says St. Thomas, God had waited for the consent of humanity through the voice of Mary. By this free fiat, she cooperated in the sacrifice of the Cross, since she gave us its Priest and Victim. She cooperated in it also by offering her Son in the Temple, as a most pure host, at the moment when the aged Simeon saw by prophetic light that this Child was the "salvation ... prepared before the face of all peoples: a light to the revelation of the Gentiles and the glory of Thy people Israel."More enlightened than Simeon, Mary offered her Son, and began to suffer deeply with Him when she heard the holy old man tell her that He would be a sign which would be contradicted and that a sword would pierce her soul.

Mary cooperated in the sacrifice of Christ, especially at the foot of the Cross, uniting herself to Him, more closely than can be expressed, by satisfaction or reparation, and by merit. Some Saints, in particular the stigmatics, have been exceptionally united to the sufferings and merits of our Savior: for example, St. Francis of Assisi and St. Catherine of Siena, and yet their share in His suffering cannot be compared with Mary's. How did Mary offer her Son? As He offered Himself. By a miracle, Jesus could easily have prevented the blows of His executioners from causing His death; He offered Himself voluntarily. "No man," He says, "taketh it (My life) away from Me: but I lay it down of Myself. And I have power to lay it down: and I have power to take it up again." Jesus renounced His right to life; He offered Himself wholly for our salvation. Of Mary, St. John says: "There stood by the Cross of Jesus, His mother," surely very closely united to Him in His suffering and oblation. As Pope Benedict XV says: "She renounced her rights as a mother over her Son for the salvation of all men." She accepted the Martyrdom of Christ and offered it for us. In the measure of her love, she felt all the torments that He suffered in body and soul. More than anyone else, Mary endured the very suffering of the Savior; she suffered for sin in the degree of her love for God, whom sin offends; for her Son, whom sin crucified; for souls, which sin ravishes and kills. The Blessed Virgin's charity incomparably surpassed that of the greatest Saints. She

thus cooperated in the sacrifice of the cross by way of satisfaction or reparation, by offering to God for us, with great sorrow and most ardent love, the life of her most dear Son, whom she rightly adored and who was dearer to her than her very life.

In that instant, the Savior satisfied for us in strict justice by His human acts which drew from His divine personality an infinite value capable of making reparation for the offense of all mortal sins that ever had been or would be committed. His love pleased God more than all sins displease Him. Herein lies the essence of the mystery of the redemption. In union with her Son on Calvary, Mary satisfied for us by a satisfaction based, not on strict justice, but on the rights of the infinite friendship or charity which united her to God.

At the moment when her Son was about to die on the Cross, apparently defeated and abandoned, she did not cease for a moment to believe that He was the Word made flesh, the Savior of the world, Who would rise in three days as He had predicted. This was the greatest act of faith and hope ever made; after Christ's act of love, it was also the greatest act of love. It made Mary the Queen of Martyrs, for she was a Martyr, not only for Christ but with Christ; so much so, that a single Cross sufficed for her Son and for her. She was, in a sense, nailed to it by her love for Him. She was thus the Co-redemptrix, as Pope Benedict XV says, in this sense, that with Christ, through Him, and in Him, she bought back the human race.

For the same reason, all that Christ merited for us on the Cross in strict justice, Mary merited for us by congruous merit, based on the charity that united her to God. Christ alone, as head of the human race, could strictly merit to transmit Divine life to us. But Pius X sanctioned the teaching of theologians when he wrote: "Mary, united to Christ in the work of salvation, merited de congruo for us what Christ merited for us de condigno."

This common teaching of theologians, thus sanctioned by the sovereign pontiffs, has for its principal traditional basis the fact that Mary is called in all Greek and Latin tradition the new Eve, Mother of all men in regard to the life of the soul, as Eve was in regard to the life of the body. It stands to reason that the spiritual mother of all men ought to give them spiritual life, not as the principal physical cause (for God alone can be the principal physical cause of Divine grace),

but as the moral cause by merit de congruo, merit de condigno being reserved to Christ. [Essentially Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange refers to the theological concept of strict or full merit, owed directly because of the equality between the one rendering the service and the service itself,(justice) versus proportionate merit [charity, love.--- The Web Master.]

The Office and Mass proper to Mary Mediatrix assemble the principal testimonies of Tradition on this point with their scriptural foundations, in particular the clear-cut statements of St. Ephrem, the glory of the Syriac Church, of St. Germanus of Constantinople, of St. Bernard, and of St. Bernardine of Siena. Even as early as the second and third centuries, St. Justin, St. Irenaeus, and Tertullian insisted on the parallel between Eve and Mary, and showed that if the first concurred in our fall, the second collaborated in our redemption.

This teaching of Tradition itself rests in part on the words of Christ, related in the Gospel of the Mass for the Feast of Mary Mediatrix. The Savior was about to die and, seeing "His mother and the disciple standing whom He loved, He saith to His mother: Woman, behold thy son. After that, He saith to the disciple: Behold thy mother. And from that hour the disciple took her to his own." The literal meaning of these words, "Behold thy son," points to St. John, but for God, events and persons signify others; here St. John represents spiritually all men purchased by the sacrifice of the Cross. God and His Christ speak not only by the words They use, but by the events and persons whose masters They are, and by whom They signify what They wish according to the plan of Providence. The dying Christ, addressing Mary and John, saw in John the personification of all men, for whom He was shedding His Blood. As this word, so to speak, created in Mary a most profound maternal affection, which did not cease to envelop the soul of the beloved disciple, this supernatural affection extended to all of us and made Mary truly the spiritual mother of all men. In the eighth century we find Abbot Rupert expressing this same idea, and after him St. Bernardine of Siena, Bossuet, Blessed Grignion de Montfort, and many others. It is the logical result of what tradition tells us about the new Eve, the spiritual mother of all men.

Finally, if we studied theologically all that is required for merit de congruo, based not on justice, but on charity or supernatural friendship which unites us to God, we could not find it better realized than in Mary. Since, in fact, a good

Christian mother by her virtue thus merits graces for her children, with how much greater reason can Mary, who is incomparably more closely united to God by the plenitude of her charity, merit de congruo for all men.

Such is the ascending mediation of Mary in so far as she offered the sacrifice of the cross with Christ for us, making reparation and meriting for us. We shall now consider the descending mediation, by which she distributes the gifts of God to us.

ST. LOUIS DE MONFORT AND MARY, MEDIATRIX OF ALL GRACE: A REFLECTION

Rev. Fr. Melvin P. Castro

In the preface of the book "True Devotion to Mary" by St. Louis de Montfort, Cardinal O"Connell says: "The more we reflect, the more we realize that the mission of Christianity is to take possession of man in his entirety in order to transform him into a soul worthy of heaven.

Hence Pius XI, speaking of Christian education, says that its "proper and immediate end is to cooperate with divine grace in forming the true and perfect Christian, that is to form Christ Himself in those regenerated by Baptism." In this work of transformation, a definite part has been assigned by God to the Blessed Virgin Mary, that of leading souls to Jesus Christ and of keeping them in His love." Thus it is God"s Will that we go to Mary if we desire salvation in the most effective way.

St. Louis de Montfort was the one to whom it was given the grace to lead souls to this perfect path to a Christian life, guaranteed to lead men to eternal life and accomplish God"s desire to establish in the world devotion to the Immaculate Heart as revealed at Fatima.

When Our Lady at Lipa asked the nuns to consecrate themselves to her as her slaves in the spirit of St. Louis de Montfort she is pointing out the most efficacious means of developing true devotion to her, of having great trust and confidence in Mary, so that she can effectively be the Mediatrix of God to men. Our Lord abhors lukewarm souls because it is ineffective and even dangerous to the spiritual life; so also one cannot have a haphazard and weak devotion to Mary if one desires to be united with Jesus.

The Church continues to teach on the mediating role of Mary. At Lipa, our Lady is telling us that Montfort"s teaching of true devotion is the most effective method in opening the gates of the mediating power of Mary. Just as we need to cooperate with God"s grace in order to be saved, so also we need to open our hearts to Mary for her to effectively give us not only divine graces but even the very Source- "All

Grace”- Himself. In consecrating ourselves as loving slaves of Mary we open our hearts to her as she welcomes us fully into hers. And as we enter into the heart of the Mother, we shall be led by her to behold her Son. Mary is the Gate of Heaven and Montfort‟s “True Devotion to Mary” is the key to that Gate.

Since it is God's desire that we honor, love and obey Our Mother in heaven just as He did while here on earth, it is only right and proper that He will gauge our love for Him by the extent to which we obey His desire. Thus, the extent to which we love Mary is the extent to which we love Our Lord and the extent of our devotion to Her is the extent of our devotion to Him. Therefore, true devotees of Our Lady are true devotees of Our Lord.

This is why Our Lady, Mediatrix of All Grace, recommended the Montfortian way. Truly desiring to give her Son to each and every soul so that they can live good, even saintly, Christian lives and reach the safety of eternal life, our mother in heaven is telling us: “Come to me as a true child of mine, as a true devotee of mine, and your reward will be My Son in time and for all eternity.

Be consecrated as my loving slave and you will indeed become the loving slave of the Divine Master. Use the Montfortian way which is of my own inspiration and I will truly be for you the Mediatrix of All Grace, who is no one else but my Son Jesus, the Author of all graces”

MARY'S UNIVERSAL MEDIATION IN GENERAL

Fr. Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, O. P.

Our Holy Mother the Church approved during the pontificate of Benedict XV the proper Mass and Office of Mary, Mediatrix of all Graces. Many theologians consider that the doctrine of Mary's universal mediation is sufficiently contained in the deposit of revelation to be one day proposed solemnly as an object of faith by the infallible Church. It is taught by the ordinary magisterium of the Church through the liturgy, through encyclical letters, through pastoral letters, in preaching, and in the works of theologians approved by the Church. Let us see first what is meant by this mediation and then inquire if it is affirmed by tradition and proved by theology.

What is meant by Mary's Universal Mediation?

St. Thomas says, speaking of the mediation of the Savior (IIIa, q. 26, a. I): 'It pertains to the office of a mediator between God and men to unite them.' That is, as he explains in the following article, the Mediator offers to God the prayers of men, and most particularly, sacrifices which is the principal act of the virtue of religion, and distributes as well to men God's sanctifying gifts, light from on high and grace. There is, thus, a double movement in mediation: one upwards in the form of prayer and sacrifice, and the other downwards in the form of God's gifts to men.

The office of Mediator belongs fully only to Jesus, the Man-God, Who alone could reconcile us with God by offering Him, on behalf of men, the infinite sacrifice of the Cross, which is perpetuated in Holy Mass. He alone, as Head of Mankind, could merit for us injustice the grace of salvation and apply it to those who do not reject His saving action. It is as man that He is Mediator, but as a Man in Whom humanity is united hypostatically to the Word and endowed with the fullness of grace, the grace of Headship, which overflows on men. As St. Paul puts it: 'For there is one God, and one Mediator of God and men, the man Christ Jesus: Who gave Himself for a redemption for all, a testimony in due times' (1 Tim. ii, 5-6).

But, St. Thomas adds (loc. cit.): 'there is no reason why there should not be, after Christ, other secondary mediators between God and men, who co-operate in uniting them in a ministerial and dispositive manner.' Such mediators dispose men for the action of the principal Mediator, or transmit it, but always in dependence on His merits.

The prophets and priests of the Old Testament were mediators of this kind, for they announced the Savior to the chosen people by offering sacrifices which were types of the great sacrifice of the Cross. The priests of the New Testament may also be spoken of as mediators between God and men, for they are the ministers of the supreme Mediator, offering sacrifice in His Name, and administering the Sacraments.

The question arises, is Mary, in subordination to and in dependence on the merits of Christ, universal mediatrix for all men from the time of the coming of the Savior, in regard to obtaining and distributing all graces, both in general and in particular? Does it not appear that she is? Nor is her role precisely that of a minister, but that of an associate in the redemptive work, in the words of St. Albert already quoted.

Though non-Catholics answer the question with a denial, the Christian sense of the faithful, formed for years by the liturgy, which is one of the voices of the ordinary magisterium of the Church, has no hesitation in maintaining that, by the very fact of her being Mother of the Redeemer, all the indications are that Mary is universal mediatrix, for she finds herself placed between God and men, and more particularly between her Son and men.

Since she is a creature she is, of course, altogether below God Incarnate. But at the same time she is raised far above men by the grace of the Divine maternity, which is of the hypostatic order, and by the fulness of grace which she received even from her Immaculate Conception. Hence, the mediation attributed by the liturgy and the Christian sense of the faithful to Mary is, strictly speaking, subordinated to that of Jesus and not co-ordinated; her mediation depends completely on the merits of the Universal Mediator. Nor is her mediation necessary [for that of Jesus is superabundant and needs no complement: it has however been willed by God as a kind of radiation of the Savior's mediation, and of all radiations the most perfect. The Church regards it as most useful and efficacious to obtain from God all that we need to lead us directly or indirectly to salvation and perfection. Last of all, Mary's mediation is perpetual and extends to all men, and to all graces without any exception whatever.

The above is the precise sense in which universal mediation is attributed to Mary in the liturgy, in the Feast of Mary Mediatrix, and by the theologians who have recently treated the question at great length.

The Testimony of Tradition

Mary's mediation was affirmed in a general and implicit way from the earliest centuries by the use of the titles, the New Eve, the Mother of the Living. There is all the more reason for so understanding tradition in that the titles were attributed to her not solely because she gave birth physically to the Savior but because she co-operated morally in His redemptive work, especially by uniting herself very intimately to the sacrifice of the Cross. From the 4th century onwards, and notably in the 5th century, the Fathers affirm clearly that Mary intercedes for us, that all the benefits and helps to salvation come to us through her, by her intervention and her special protection. From the same time too she is called mediatrix between God and men or between Christ and us. Recent studies have thrown much light on this point.

The antithesis between Eve, cause of death, and Mary, cause of salvation for all men is repeated by St. Cyril of Jerusalem, St. Epiphanius, St. Jerome, St. John Chrysostom.The following invocation of St. Ephrem deserves to be quoted in full: 'Hail, most excellent mediatrix of God and men, hail most efficacious reconciler of the whole world.' St. Augustine speaks of Mary as mother of all the members of our Head, Jesus Christ. He tells us that by her charity she co-operated in the spiritual birth of all the faithful who are Christ's members. St. Peter Chrysologus says that Mary is the mother of all the living by grace whereas Eve is the mother, by nature, of all the dying. It is evident that he considers Mary as associated with the Divine plan for our redemption.

From the 8th century we may quote the Venerable Bede. St. Andrew of Crete calls Mary Mediatrix of grace, dispenser and cause of life. St. Germanus of Constantinople says that no one has been saved without the co-operation of the Mother of God. The title of mediatrix is given by St. John Damascene also, who asserts that we owe to her all the benefits conferred on us by Jesus.

In the 9th century we find St. Peter Damien teaching that nothing is accomplished in the work of our redemption without her. [15] The teaching of St. Anselm, [16] Eadmer, [17] and St. Bernard in the 12th century is the same. St. Bernard speaks of Mary as: gratiae inventrix, mediatrix, salutis restauratrix saeculorum.

From the middle of the 12th century the explicit affirmation of Mary's co-operation in our redemption becomes quite common. Her co-operation is looked on as consummated by her consent to her sacrifice at the Annunciation, and its accomplishment on Calvary. Among names that may be cited are those of Arnold of

Chartres, Richard of St. Victor, St. Albert the Great, and Richard of Saint- Laurent. St. Thomas seems to be of the same opinion. It is found quite explicitly in St. Bernadine of Siena, St. Antonine, Suarez, Bossuet, and St. Alphonsus. St. Grignon de Montfort is one of those who, in the 18th century, did the most to spread the doctrine by bringing out its practical conclusions.

In the encyclical Ad Diem IlIum, Pius X stated that Mary is the all-powerful mediatrix of the world before her Son: 'Totius terrarum orbis potentissima apud Unigenitum Filium suum mediatrix et conciliatrix.' The title of mediatrix has been consecrated by the institution of the Feast of Mary, Mediatrix of All Graces, on January 21, 1921.

Theological Arguments

The theological arguments invoked by the Fathers and still more explicitly by theologians are principally the following:

Mary deserves the title of universal mediatrix, subordinated to the Redeemer, if she is an intermediary between Him and men, presenting to Him their prayers and obtaining benefits from Him for them. But that is precisely Mary's role. For, though a creature, she reaches by her divine maternity to the frontiers of the Divinity , and she has received a fulness of grace which is intended to overflow on us. She has, too, co-operated in saving us by consenting freely to be the Mother of the Savior and by uniting herself as intimately as possible to His sacrifice. We shall see later that she has merited and made satisfaction for us, and we know from the teaching of the Church that she continues to intercede for us so as to obtain for us all graces that contribute to our salvation. These different offices pertain to the exercise of her maternity, as we have already seen.

Thus Jesus is the principal and perfect Mediator, in dependence on whose merits - and they are superabundant and sufficient of themselves - Mary exercises her subordinate mediation. But Mary's mediation has nevertheless been willed by God because of our weakness and because God wished to honor her by allowing her the exercise of causality in the order of salvation and sanctification.

The work of redemption proceeds therefore entirely from God as First Cause of grace, entirely from Jesus as principal and perfect Mediator, and entirely from Mary as subordinate mediatrix. These three causes are not partial and co-ordinate - as are three men who drag the same load ---- but total and subordinated: the second acts under the influence of the first, and the third under the influence of the second.

An example which may make the point clear is that of the fruit which proceeds entirely from God the Author of nature, entirely from the tree, and entirely from the branch on which it grows. It does not proceed in its different parts from different causes: neither is our redemption the work in part of the Divinity, in part of the Humanity, and in part of Mary.

It is worth noting how becoming it is that Mary who was redeemed by the Savior in a most excellent manner and preserved from all sin, Original and actual, should co-operate in this way in our justification and our final perseverance.

Mary's mediation is of a much higher order than that of the Saints, for she alone has given us the Savior, she alone was so intimately united to the sacrifice of the Cross, she alone is universal mediatrix for all mankind and for all graces in particular ---- even for that grace which is of all the most particular, the grace of the present moment which assures our fidelity from instant to instant.[16]

[16] The Mother of the Savior Nihil Obstat and Imprimi Potest 1941 and 1948 TAN BOOKS

THE INFLUENCE OF MARY MEDIATRIX

Father Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P.

Much of the devotion to Mary shown by Christians of the Catholic and other Ancient Churches depends upon Mary's mediation. This mediation is seen in terms of Mary's assistance in prayer and in obtaining grace. Many Protestants oppose prayer to Mary and the Saints, citing this verse: "For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; " (I Timothy 2:5).

SO IF JESUS IS THE ONE MEDIATOR, WHY PRAY TO MARY?

As in other cases, Protestant fundamentalists often tend to quote just one verse completely out of context. So let's look at the whole passage.

> *"I urge then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone - for kings, for all those in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceful life in all godliness and holiness. This is good and pleases God our Saviour, who wants all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man, Christ Jesus." (1Timothy 2:1-5)*

From this full text of the passage we can see three important things:

1. Paul is asking fellow Christians to pray and intercede with God for those in authority and for other third parties.

2. These prayers and intercessions are being made on behalf of other people, and to God. This is a mediation of prayer. Christians are being asked to mediate between all people, Christian and non-Christian, and God.

3. Since this is all one passage, it is absolutely clear that when Paul refers to there being only one mediator between God and men, he is not referring to the mediation of prayer. Jesus's unique mediation is a different mediation - the mediation of our salvation.

Jesus is the one Mediator of our salvation, our only Saviour. But He is not our only intercessor, as the whole passage above clearly indicates. So the one passage those fundamentalists have used to deny intercessionary prayer, when read in context, actually backs up intercessionary prayer.

YES. BUT WHY SHOULD I ASK MARY OR ANYONE ELSE TO PRAY TO GOD FOR ME WHEN I CAN PRAY TO HIM MYSELF?

When we are ill, or someone we care for needs prayer, we ask other people to pray to God for us. Why do we do this if our own prayer is enough?

In James 5. 14-16 we are told to get the Elders of the Church to pray for us and to annoint us when we are sick. Reading on, we find:

> *" ...The fervent prayer of a righteous person is very powerful. Elijah was a human being like us; yet he prayed earnestly that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain upon the land. Then he prayed again, and the sky gave rain and the earth produced its fruit." (James 5: 16-18)*

So we see that intercession strengthens prayer. And the more righteous and faithful the intercessor is, the more powerful the prayer.

BUT THAT IS PRAYER ON EARTH. I'VE BEEN TOLD THAT PEOPLE IN HEAVEN CAN NEITHER SEE US OR PRAY FOR US.

That is a recent, man-made doctrine, with no authority behind it. Hebrews 12.1 speaks of "a great cloud of witnesses" who surround us, and who consist of the faithful holy ones of God. Many examples of these witnesses are given in the preceding Chapter 11 of Hebrews.

Later in the Bible we see this vision of heaven:

Revelation 4.4: *Surrounding the throne were twenty four other thrones, and seated on them were twenty four elders. They were dressed in white and had crowns of gold on their heads.*

Revelation 5.8: *...and the twenty four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.*

The twenty-four elders are shown offering the prayers of Christians to God; which is a mediatory role.

WHY MARY IN PARTICULAR?

The basic creed of Christianity, the Nicene Creed, accepted by all Trinitarian Christian Churches, refers to the Communion of Saints. All Christians in heaven and on earth are together (i.e. in communion) through Christ. As we have seen, those in heaven can witness what goes on on earth and offer prayers to God. This intercession is powerful, because those in heaven are truly "righteous".

Of all creatures in heaven, Mary is closest to God, being the God-bearer. As a fellow Christian, and indeed the first Christian, she has access to the throne of grace through Jesus. As the Mother of all Christians, she cares and intercedes for her children. As the Heavenly Queen Mother it is her office to make requests of the King of Kings. Therefore Mary's intercessionary prayer is the most powerful and effective.

Seeking Mary's intercession probably dates back to the earliest Christians. One of the oldest Christian prayers recorded in writing, the Sub Tuum, from the 200s AD, is a prayer to Mary:

We fly to your patronage, O holy Mother of God.
Despise not our petitions in our necessities,
But deliver us from all dangers,
O ever-glorious and Blessed Virgin!

BUT I DON'T NEED MARY WHEN I CAN GO DIRECTLY TO GOD.

Why not say "I don't need the rest of my family as long as I have my father"? The Church is a single body; the different members interelate and rely on one another: "*The eye cannot say unto the hand, "I don't need you!" And the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you!"* (I Co 12:21).

WHY DO WE NEED MARY?

Mary has a vital part in the entire work of redemption. The Lord does not want to save us without our participation. He seeks our voluntary acceptance of salvation. He stands at the door, knocks and waits. (Rev. 3:10).

In the same way, since the incarnation of the Son of God was necessary for the salvation of the human race, that incarnation would not be achieved by force,

but needed the consent of the chosen one. Thus the incarnation, and the salvation of the entire human race were brought about to a major extent because the Virgin Mary, by faith, consented to God's plan.

"I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May it be to me as you have said." (Luke 1:38)

The extent of Mary's act of faith is often overlooked. She was a single virgin, betrothed to Joseph, and giving birth to a fatherless child would place her in dire peril of disgrace, abandonment and possibly much worse, in a society that customarily stoned adulterers to death. Nor did she know what Joseph's or her family's personal reaction would be. Yet she did not hesitate to accept God's commission. Her trust in God made her the first Christian believer and the first among the redeemed. As the Mother of God, the girl from Galilee became the highest created being. When she said "yes" to God her answer was on behalf of the whole human race. Just as Eve's disobedience was on behalf of the whole human race. In this way, the Virgin Mary's significance in the work of our salvation is of the first order.

St. Irenaeus Against Heresies (circa 189 A.D.) :

> *..the virgin Eve, betrothed to a man but nevertheless still a virgin, was unhappily led astray,-- yet that deception was done away with because the Virgin Mary, betrothed to a man but nevertheless still a virgin, heard the truth spoken by an angel, and was obedient. For just as the former was led astray by the word of an angel, so that she fled from God when she had transgressed His word; so did the latter, by an angelic communication receive the glad tidings that she should sustain (portaret) God, being obedient to His word. The former disobeyed God, yet the latter was persuaded to be obedient to God, so that the Virgin Mary might become patroness (advocata) of the virgin Eve. And thus, as the human race fell into bondage to death by means of a virgin, so is it rescued by a virgin; virginal disobedience having been balanced in the opposite scale by virginal obedience. In the same way the sin of the first created man (protoplasti) is made amends by the correction of the First-begotten, the coming of the serpent is conquered by the harmlessness of the dove, those bonds being unloosed by which we had been fast bound to death.*

In reference to the Blessed Virgin, St. Ephraem (373) said: *"With the Mediator, you are the Mediatrix of the entire world"* Antipater of Bostra, a Father of the Council of Ephesus (AD 431), wrote: *"Hail you who acceptably intercede as a Mediatrix for mankind."*

Revelation 12.17: *Then the dragon was enraged at the woman and went off to make war against the rest of her offspring - those who obey God's commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus.*

Having been given to all Christians by Jesus as their heavenly Mother, Mary is always there for the help of her children.[17]

[17] TAKEN FROM THE THREE AGES OF THE INTERIOR LIFE, VOL. 1 Imprimatur and Nihil Obstat, 1948. Retreived from:www.ourladyweb.com

THE CHURCH TEACHING ON MARY, MEDIATRIX OF ALL GRACE: A COMPILATION

Compiled by Father William G. Most

1) Leo XIII, Encyclical, Supremi Apostolatus officio. Sept 1, 1883. ASS 16, 1883. 1113.

We judge nothing more powerful and better for this purpose than by religion and devotion to deserve well of the great Mother of God, the Virgin Mary, who is the treasurer [sequestra] of our peace with God, and the mediatrix [administra] of graces....

2) Leo XIII, Encyclical, Superiore anno, August 30, 1884. ASS 17, 1884. 49.

... may He hear the prayers of those who beseech through her, whom He Himself willed to be the mediatrix [administram] of graces.

3) Leo XIII, Encyclical, Octobri mense adventante, Sept 22, 1891, ASS 24, 1891, 196.

... it is right to say, that nothing at all of that very great treasury of all grace which the Lord brought us--for 'grace and truth came through Jesus Christ' [Jn 1.17]--nothing is imparted to us except through Mary, since God so wills, so that just as no one can come to the Father except through the Son, so in general, no one can come to Christ except through His Mother.

4) Leo XIII, Encyclical, Iucunda semper, Sept 8, 1984. ASS 27, 1894. 179.

... when He [the Father] has been invoked with excellent prayers, our humble voice turns to Mary; in accordance with no other law than that law of conciliation and petition which was expressed as follows by St. Bernardine of Siena : 'Every grace that is communicated to this world has a threefold course. For by excellent order, it is dispensed from God to Christ, from Christ to the Virgin, from the Virgin to us.' [Internal quote from S. Bernardine, Sermon on Nativity of B. V. M. n. 6.]

5) Leo XIII, Encyclical, Adiutricem populi, Sept 5, 1895, ASS 28, 1895, 130.

For thereupon, by divine plan, she so began to watch over the Church, so to be near and to favor us as a Mother, that she who had been the minister [administra] of the mystery of human redemption, was equally the minister [administra] of the grace to be given from it for all time, practically immeasurable power being given to her.

6) Leo XIII, Encyclical, Diuturni temporis spatium, Sept 5, 1898, ASS 31, 1898, 146.

For from her, as in a must abundant conduit, the drafts of heavenly graces are given: '... in her hands are the treasures of the mercies of the Lord'; for 'God wills that she be the principle of all good things.' [Internal quotes are from St. John Damascene, Series I De Nativitate Virginis and St. Irenaeus, Against Valentinus III. 33.].

7) Leo XIII, Encyclical, Diuturni temporis spatium, Sept 5, 1898, ASS 31, 1898, 147.

'God wills her to be the principle of all good things.' [Citing St. John Damascene, Series I De nativitate Virginis.]

8) Leo XIII, Parta humano generi, Apostolic Letter, Sept 8, 1901, ASS 34, 1901, 195.

So may the most powerful Virgin Mother, who once 'cooperated in love that the faithful might be born in the Church', be even now the means and mediatrix of our salvation. [Citing St. Augustine, De sancta Virginitate 6.]

9) St. Pius X, Encyclical, Ad diem illum, Feb. 2, 1904, AAS 36, 1904. 453-54.

Hence that never dissociated manner of life and labors of the Mother and the Son... . there stood by the Cross of Jesus His Mother, not merely occupied in looking at the dreadful sight, but even rejoicing that 'her only Son was being offered for the salvation of the human race; and so did she suffer, with Him, that if it had been possible, she would have much more gladly suffered herself all the torments that her Son underwent' [St. Bonaventure I. Sent. d, 48, ad Litt. dub. 4]. Now from this common sharing of will and suffering between Christ and Mary, she 'merited to become most worthily the Reparatrix of the lost world' [Eadmer, De Excellentia

Virginis Mariae, 9] and therefore Dispensatrix of all the gifts which Jesus gained for us by His Death and by His Blood.... But Mary as St. Bernard fittingly remarks [De Aquaeductu 4] is the 'channel' or, even, the neck, through which the body is joined to the head, and likewise through which the head exerts its power and strength on the body. 'For she is the neck of our Head, by which all spiritual gifts are communicated to His Mystical Body.' [St. Bernardine of Siena, Quadrag. De Evangelio aeterno, Sermo X, a. 3. c. 3.]

10) St. Pius X, Litterae Apostolicae, August 27, 1910, AAS 2, 1910, 901.

We, to whom nothing is dearer than that the devotion of the faithful towards the Virgin of Lourdes, the treasurer [sequestra] of all graces, be more and more increased, think we should gladly assent to these wishes.

11) Benedict XV, Litterae Apostolicae, Inter Sodalicia, March 22, 1918, AAS 10, 1918, 182.

... the fact that she was with Him crucified and dying, was in accord with the divine plan. For with her suffering and dying Son, Mary endured suffering and almost death. She gave up her Mother's rights over her Son to procure the salvation of mankind, and to appease the divine justice, she, as much as she could, immolated her Son, so that one can truly affirm that together with Christ she has redeemed the human race. But if for this reason, every kind of grace we receive from the treasury of the redemption is ministered as it were through the hands of the same Sorrowful Virgin, everyone can see that a holy death should be expected from her, since it is precisely by this gift that the work of the Redemption is effectively and permanently completed in each one ... further, there is a most constant belief among the faithful, proved by long experience, that as many as employ the same Virgin as Patron, will not at all perish forever.

12) Benedict XV, Encyclical, Fausto appetente die, June 29, 1921, AAS 13, 1921, 334.

For he [St. Dominic] knew well that Mary ... has such influence with her divine Son, that He confers whatever of graces He confers on humans, does so always with her as minister and decision-maker [administra et arbitra].

13) Pius XI, Apostolic Letter, Galliam, Ecclesiae filiam, March 2, 1922, AAS 14, 1922 186.

She, the Virgin Mother, [is] the treasurer [sequestra] of all graces with God.

14) Pius XI, Apostolic Letter, Exstat in civitate, Feb. 1, 1924, AAS 16 1924, 152.

It is clear that many Roman Pontiffs ... have stirred up devotion among the nations to the most clement Mother, the Virgin Mary, the Consoler of the afflicted, and the treasurer [sequestra] of all graces with God.

15) Pius XI, Apostolic Letter, Cognitum sane, Jan 14, 1926, AAS 18, 1926, 213.

We, to whom nothing is dearer than that the devotion of the Christian people be aroused more and more towards the Virgin who is the treasurer [sequestra] of all graces with God, think we should grant these wishes.

16) Pius XI, Encyclical, Ingravescentibus malis, Sept 29, 1937, AAS 29, 1927, 380.

... we know also that all things are imparted to us from God the Greatest and Best, through the hands of the Mother of God.

17) Pius XII, Encyclical, Mystici Corporis, June 29, 1943, AAS 35, 1943, 248.

May she, then, the most holy Mother of all the members of Christ, to whose Immaculate Heart we have confidently consecrated all people ... ask earnestly that most abundant streams of graces from the lofty Head may flow down on all the members of the Mystical body without interruption.

18) Pius XII, Radiomessage to Fatima, Bendito seia, May 13, 1946, AAS 38, 19465, 266.

... having been associated, as Mother and Minister, with the King of martyrs in the ineffable work of human Redemption, she is always associated, with a practically measureless power, in the distribution of the graces that derive from the Redemption.... And her kingdom is as vast as that of her Son and God, since nothing is excluded from her dominion.

19) John XXIII, Epistle to Cardinal Agaganian, Legate to Marian Congress in Saigon, Jan 31, 1959, AAS 51, 1959, 88.

For the faithful can do nothing more fruitful and salutary than to win for themselves the most powerful patronage of the Immaculate Virgin, so that by this most sweet Mother, there may be opened to them, all the treasures of the divine Redemption, and so they may have life, and have it more abundantly. Did not the Lord will that we have everything through Mary?"

Discorsi II, 66.

"From her hands hope for all graces.

20) Vatican II, Lumen gentium ## 61-62.[18]

... in suffering with Him as He died on the cross, she cooperated in the work of the Savior, in an altogether singular way, by obedience, faith, hope, and burning love, to restore supernatural life to souls. As a result she is our Mother in the order of grace. This motherhood of Mary in the economy of grace lasts without interruption, from the consent which she gave in faith at the annunciation, and which she unhesitatingly bore with under the cross, even to the perpetual consummation of all the elect. For after being assumed into heaven, she has not put aside this saving function, but by her manifold intercession, she continues to win the gifts of eternal salvation for us. By her motherly love, she takes care of the brothers of her Son who are still in pilgrimage and in dangers and difficulties, until they be led through to the happy fatherland. For this reason, the Blessed Virgin is invoked in the Church under the titles of Advocate, Auxiliatrix, Adiutrix, and Mediatrix. This however it to be so understood that it takes nothing away, or adds nothing to the dignity and efficacy of Christ the one Mediator. For no creature can ever be put on the same level with the Incarnate Word and Redeemer....

[18] Although Vatican II did not add the words "of all graces," it added a note on the above passage, in which it refers us to the texts of Leo XIII, Adiutricem populi, St. Pius X, Ad diem illum, Pius XI, Miserentissimus Redemptor, and Pius XII, Radiomessage to Fatima. Leo XIII in that text spoke of her, as we saw above, as having "practically limitless power." St. Pius X said she was the "dispensatrix of all the gifts, and is the "neck" connecting the Head of the Mystical Body to the Members. But all power flows through the neck. Pius XII said "Her kingdom is as vast as that of her Son and God, since nothing is excluded from her dominion.

DECLARATION OF DECREE ON THE PUBLIC DEVOTION TO MARY, THE MEDIATRIX OF AL GRACE

November 2, 2009

Mother Bernadette of the Mother of God died with this words...

"I never forget my bargain to our Lady that I may die so that she will live again..... I offered my life and I have no doubt that my death will be her life.... My only ambition all these 35 years is to suffer and die a victim for the Cause"

Sr Bernadette of the Mother of God OCD

Shortly after...

November 12, 2009

On the Anniversary of the last Apparition of the Mediatrix, a Decree was declared by Archbishop Ramon C. Arguelles, D.D. Archbishop of Lipa

Declaration of DECREE

Whereas, on April 12, 1951 the then Apostolic Administrator of Lipa, Rufino J. Santos, D.D., issued a decree banning public veneration of the image of Our Lady Mary, Mediatrix of All Grace;

Whereas, while the Carmelite nuns and some others, most specially the Lipa clergy, obediently observed the ban, the great majority of ordinary faithful silently but perseveringly continued their prayer to and devotion towards the Mediatrix of All Grace;

Whereas, on July 16, 1991 after 40 years of silence the Most Rev Mariano G. Gaviola in effect lifted the ban and allowed the veneration of the Image of Mary, Mediatrix of All Grace for the people to pray for world peace;

Whereas, the fervour of numerous faithful from the Archdiocese of Lipa and from elsewhere continued and even increased throughout the subsequent years and many miracles of physical and spiritual healing have been ceaselessly reported;

Whereas, increasing number of pilgrims heed the supposed call of the Blessed Mother Mediatrix of All Grace by visiting the monastery making penitential processions and praying almost everyday but most of all on first Saturdays and every twelfth day of the month;

Whereas, the faithful seek from the official church guidance and assistance in deeper faith;

Whereas, the local church of Lipa that will celebrate its centenary from April 10,2010 to April 10, 2011 looks forward to a deeper renewal of faith in all the faithful and the increase missionary fervour with the help of Mary, the Star of Third Millennium Evangelization;

Whereas in the last one hundred years apparently the issue on the Mediatrix of All Grace, regardless of the authenticity or not of the so-called Marian apparitions in the Carmel of Lipa, is the most celebrated event recorded of this local Church;

So, therefore, I, the undersigned Archbishop of the Archdiocese of Lipa declare and publicly announce:

1. That pursuant to the instructions and conditions issued by my predecessor Archbishop Mariano G. Gaviola, the decree of 1951 is hereby reversed;

2. That the public veneration of the image of Mary, Mediatrix of All Grace in the Carmelite Monastery of Lipa be continued and made available for the prayer of the pilgrims for true peace in our nation and the sanctification of all priests;

3. That the contemplative and prayerful atmosphere of the Carmelite monastery as willed by the reforms of St. Teresa of Avila be properly maintained for the edification and spiritual growth of the pilgrims who join the prayers of the contemplatives of the said place;

4. That all bans written or unwritten intended to curtail or diminish the devotion to Mary Mediatrix of All Grace be lifted;

5. Finally, that a new commission be established to review the documents about the so-called apparitions in 1948 as well as to compile further documents thereafter up to the present.

Given this 12th day of November in the year of the Lord two thousand and nine.

Archbishop Ramon C. Arguelles, D.D.

Archbishop of Lipa

THE PHILIPPINE BISHOPS AND THE MEDIATRIX

Ramon C. Arguelles, D.D., STL

To Their Eminences and Exellencies, the Reverend Fathers, Religious and Concerned People of God:

When I was being considered to become the Archbishop of Lipa, I knew that my being SERVUS, ANCILLAE FILIUS (I am Your servant, the son of Your handmaid, Wisdom 9:5; Ps 116:16), would be both asset and liability. Being an avowed devotee of the Blessed Virgin Mother, I would shepherd a deeply Marian Archdiocese. The same Archdiocese however is the site of a supposed apparition of Our Lady in the late forties and the early fifties, an event that has caused long-term pain to so many and yet faithfully endured without anyone in the least being alienated from Holy mother Church, an event the interest in which saw resurgence in the early nineties. Lately there has been another rumored Marian apparition in the western part of the Archdiocese. Some spread the word that the present Archbishop of Lipa shows inclination to approve of the so-called apparitions. Others, mostly lay people, would exert friendly pressure on the archbishop out of his attachment to the Blessed Mother to declare the apparitions authentic. Still others, however, would refrain joining organized prayer assembly with Mary, principally under the title MEDIATRIX OF ALL GRACE, without any word from the Archbishop of Lipa. This is WHY of this DECLARATION.

I will no longer keep it secret, whatever the consequence may be, that personally I never doubted the Lipa apparitions that took place in the early years of my childhood. As I grew up later as a seminarian, young priest and then bishop, even now as archbishop I would always find solace, peace and strength in spending time praying before the image of Our Lady in the Carmel of Lipa. It is to her that I always entrust my mission and seek solutions to my problems. But I will never question any decision made by the official Church regarding the matter. Nor do I intend to create unnecessary controversy by reopening issues that should better remain quiet for no matter how long a time.

Many devotees came to Carmel and other places in the Archdiocese of Lipa. Bishops and priests are asked to join in their devotions and prayers. All of them sincerely care for our country and people and most of all for our Church. I get invited at times too. I make myself available especially during the First Saturday Penitential Procession and Eucharist. I see no problem in joining or even initiating prayer assemblies meant for specific intentions like peace in our land and in the

whole world, most of all I ask the faithful to pray the sanctity of all bishops and priests. In fact I encourage that prayer gatherings be held everywhere and anywhere in the Archdiocese to implore God through the intercession of Mary to strengthen the Church, sanctify her ministers and unite all people so that God's kingdom of Peace, Unity and Love may be realized starting in our PUEBLO AMANTE DE MARIA.

Some devout people promote the devotion to Mary, Mediatrix of All Grace, I have no objection to this beautiful Marian title as well as the image and devotion that go with it. I encourage these devotees and they have my blessing. I will even join all organized prayers for the conversion of sinners, the sanctification of all priests, the accomplishment of the mission of the Philippines to be the launching pad of evangelization in Asia. I am convinced, like many of these Marian followers, that our country is chosen by God, particularly loved by Mary, because Christ trusts that the Catholic Church in the Philippines will bring about "the new springtime of faith" also in other nations and will become a "great evangelization factor in the Third Millenium". I am convinced about what many others have told me: You Filipinos are the Missionaries of the Third Millenium. That explains why with Mary caring for us we have become known as the most prayerful and the cheerful people.

Allow me therefore to tell all my brothers in the episcopate, all priests and religious, all the faithful that I do strongly encourage anyone who draw others to a Marian attachment to Jesus. I support any initiative to strengthen the Church by a renewal of our faith and prayer with Mary all for Jesus!

Thank you for the attention you can give this declaration.

Archbishop Ramon C. Arguelles

April 17, 2005

SEPTEMBER 12, 2006 AS A NATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER, REPARATION, AND CONSECRATION FOR OUR NATION.S

PROCLAMATION NO. 1095
By the President of the Republic of the Philippines

DECLARING SEPTEMBER 12, 2006, AS A NATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER, REPARATION AND CONSECRATION FOR OUR NATION

WHEREAS, the promotion of peace and unity among the Filipino people remains to be one of the highest goals of the Government;

WHEREAS, this goal has all too often lost its relevance in our nation, which is beset by hostility, bitterness, constant conflict, and too much politics;

WHEREAS, our country is facing several challenges, which require the steadfast devotion of every Filipino to work for the common good and for the betterment of our country;

WHEREAS, a day of prayer, convertion, reparation, and consecration may serve to promote the attainment of our national goals;

WHEREAS, in order to make reaffirmation of our commitment to promote the attainment of this goal, through personal reflection, change in attitudes, and solidarity for the public welfare and the development of our country, September 12 of last year had been declared as a National Day of Prayer, Conversion, Reparation, and Consecration for our nation;
NOW, THEREFORE, I, GLORIA MACAPAGAL-ARROYO, President of the Republic of the Philippines, by virtue of the powers vested in me by law, do hereby declare September 12, 2006 as a National Day of Prayer, Reparation, and Consecration for our nation.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the seal of the Republic of the Philippines to be affixed.

DONE in the City of Manila, this 10th day of July, in the year of our Lord, Two Thousand and Six.

A ROSARY CRUSADE IN HONOR OF MARY MEDIATRIX OF ALL-GRACE

"After much difficulty, on July 4, 1948, the day when she completed her 21 years of age, at 5:00 in the morning, Teresita Castillo was able at last to escape from her paternal home to enter Carmel of Lipa. For fear that her parents would follow her, the doors of Carmel were opened immediately as soon as she arrived, and she was able to hear the Holy Mass already dressed as a Carmelite postulant." (Original Account of the Events of Lipa Carmel, 1948 by Mother Cecilia of Jesus, O.C.D.) Not long after, the lessed Mother would come down from heaven and appear to her.

The authenticity of the messages that she received were validated by miraculous cures and the extraordinary showers of rose petals witnessed not only by the Carmelite nuns but by the Most Rev. Alfredo Verzosa Bishop of Lipa then, as well as by the multitudes of people.

The grand revelation was made to Teresita Castillo when the Blessed Virgin identified herself saying, "I am Mary, Mediatrix of All Grace". This is reminiscent of that most memorable revelation given by the Blessed Mother to St. Bernadette Soubirous in Lourdes when she disclosed her identity in those words now forever etched in the Catholic consciousness: "I am the Immaculate Conception."

Unknown to the Carmelites at Lipa, the Mediatrix had earlier appeared to a Carmelite Prioress in Europe. Through the publication of Rev. Fr. Dr. Manfred Hauke, President of the German Mariological Society, the spiritual enlightenments granted to Mother Magdalen of Jesus of the Carmel of Argenteuil in Belgium are now becoming known.

From the pages of the book of Fr. Hauke emerges the story of Cardinal Desire-Joseph Mercier and his apostolate for the Mediatrix. The "formal request of the Belgian Church was the decisive impulse launching the worldwide movement for a dogmatic definition of Mary's universal mediation of grace." (Hauke, Mary Mediatress of Grace, Academy of the Immaculate Heart--New Bedford, Massachusetts, USA, 2004 p. 3) The spiritual impetus behind this initiative of Cardinal Mercier was Mother Magdalen.

Palmyre Ryckaert was born in Brussels in 1862 and chose to enter Carmel. Seen by many as a new Teresa of Avila, she had many mystical experiences which under obedience she recorded in writing: "Our Lord granted me an inner understanding of Mary's mediation. He enabled me to realize how all graces of

union and love which I receive in prayer and at Holy Communion come through the maternal intercession of the Queen of heaven. Even more, our Lord showed me that all the prayers of the faithful via the canal which is Mary are transported and offered and placed before her divine Son. So important, so oft proclaimed, so clear, so significant so overwhelming to my soul is this truth, that I would willingly underwrite it with my blood." (Hauke, p.19)

We see Lipa in a new perspective: that Lipa is inextricably linked as effect follows cause with the movement begun by Cardinal Mercier and Mother Magdalen in Belgium. The Belgian Carmelite Prioress is told of Heaven's will to have the universal mediation of Mary raised to the highest possible doctrinal level, while the Filipina Carmelite novice is given the theologically comprehensive and elegantly concise title in which the proposed dogma is encapsulated.

Teresita Castillo affirms that "All-Grace" refers to Jesus. In the physical order, Mary gave us Jesus in the flesh. In the spiritual order, as the Mediatrix of All-Grace she continues to give Christ to us throughout the 2000 years of salvation history. Lipa then appears to be a prompting from Heaven on the christological orientation of this Marian doctrine and is suggestive of the actual words to be employed in defining the new Marian dogma.

Beginning in the early part of the 20th century, Catholics in Europe upon the initiative of Cardinal Mercier were praying for the dogmatization of Mary's mediation together with the canonization of the then Blessed Louis de Montfort. In 1947, Pope Pius XII raised De Montfort to the honours of the altar. In 1948, Mary comes to Lipa and identifies herself as the Mediatrix of All Grace and singles out St. Louis de Montfort and specifies consecration to her through Holy Slavery, crystallizing the teaching of the then newly canonized saint. ("I wish you all to consecrate yourselves to me on October 7 and be my slaves") the Mediatrix to Sister Teresita Castillo, September 25, 1948, at Lipa Carmel).

The combined prayers and apostolate of Cardinal Mercier and Mother Magdalen bore fruit when in 1921 Pope Benedict XV designated May 31 as the liturgical feast of Mary Mediatrix of all graces. This was a major milestone in the road towards the dogmatic definition.

The Mercier initiative in Belgium and the ignition of popular devotion to the Mediatrix in the Philippines both originated in the bosom of the contemplative Order of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. The direction of both Belgium and Lipa is towards the definition of a new Marian dogma. St. Louis de Montfort is specifically

named in both Belgium and Lipa, And Cardinal Mercier's estimation that "a worldwide promotion of Grignion's 'true devotion' among Catholics is identical with the success of the proposal for a dogmatic definition" (Hauke p.91)is an unsurpassable assessment not only of the importance but of the necessity of Montfort's role in the movement towards the declaration of the dogma of the Mediatrix.

The parallels are so manifest that the revival of devotion to the Mediatrix in our time naturally aligns itself with the Belgian movement to dogmatize universal mediation of Mary.
In the divine design, Heaven has chosen and honored our country to be the place from whence this glorious title by which her universal mediation is acknowledged, will be brought to the whole world. Such is the spiritual grandeur of Lipa and the greatness of the ecclesial mission entrusted to the Filipino people upon whom it is now incumbent to tell the whole Catholic world of Mary's maternal mediation.

In 1951, the Philippine Hierarchy issued a negative judgment on the extraordinary happenings at Lipa. The image which received the prayers of the faithful was ordered withdrawn from public veneration. Soon the messages of our Lady eclipsed into oblivion and an entire generation of Filipinos has grown unaware of the events of 1948 thereby failing to benefit from the tremendous graces to be secured by recourse to the Blessed Mother under the title by which she identified herself.

In 1982, Mother Cecilia of Jesus, the Prioress at the time of the apparitions in 1948 knelt before her superior and formally asked permission to die. (The Roots of Teresa's Nuns in the Philippines, Vol. II by Sister Mary Teresa Sideco, O.C.D.) Her deep love for the Mediatrix prompted her to speak from the fullness of her heart to make this oblation of self, an offering of her very life to hasten the cause of Our Lady. Her Mother Superior consented and Heaven accepted her proposition that in exchange for her life, the cause of Mary at Lipa would go forward. The following day she fell off the stairs and from the violence of her fall she died. The then Archbishop of Lipa, Monsignor Mariano Gaviola granted permission in July 16, 1992 to expose once again the image of the Mediatrix for public veneration.

In February 1993, he publicly declared his personal conviction that the events at Lipa were worthy of belief.
Last November 2, 2009, Mother Bernadette of the Mother of God, a former Prioress of Lipa Carmel passed away after a long life in religion. Her diary contained the following entry: "I never forget my bargain to our Lady that I may die so that she

may live again...I offered my life and I have no doubt that my death will be her life... my only ambition all these 35 years...is to suffer and die a victim for the cause..." Ten days later the Most Rev. Ramon Arguelles, Archbishop of Lipa formally reversed the 1951 decree of the Philippine Bishops which had relegated Lipa into oblivion. He now decreed "that all bans written or unwritten intended to curtail or diminish the devotion to Mary Mediatrix of All Grace be lifted."

The extent travelled so far on this road towards the dogma of the universal mediation of Mary has been marked by prayers and sacrifices. The path ahead will be no less demanding of our individual and communal prayers and of personal sacrifices. As the liturgical feast was achieved by the prayer movement initiated by Cardinal Mercier so will we pave the road towards the dogma of the Mediatrix with our prayers of the Rosary. Thus the on-going Rosary Crusade initiated by the Confraternity of Mary Mediatrix of All Grace will have for its overarching objective the dogmatization of the universal mediation of Mary.

Let us also accompany our prayers with small sacrifices and mortifications. Let us cut down on television viewing and other forms of entertainment and instead of wasting our precious time let us spend our moments and hours in the loving meditation of the life of Our Lord and Our Lady in the most Holy Rosary. Through this, we will help overcome the spread of the sins of immorality, decadence, vice, corruption and perversion in our society.

"There is no problem, however difficult it maybe, whether temporal or spiritual, personal or familial, national or international that cannot be solved by the prayer of the rosary!" (Sister Lucia of the Immaculate Heart, O.C.D. of the Carmel of Coimbra, Portugal)

This Rosary Crusade was launched 31 May 2009 and is supported by the clergy. The response has been overwhelming and devotees have pledged more than two million rosaries. We take this opportunity to thank all who participated in this crusade.

During its launching, we prioritized praying for the Holy Father and the Clergy, the sanctification of the family, the fostering of Monfort's True Devotion to Mary and for guidance of the ecclesiastical authorities who will approve the authenticity of the apparitions at Lipa. We note with gratitude that this last intention found answer in the Decree of Archbishop Ramon Arguelles dated November 12, 2009, making an explicit revocation of the negative judgment of the Philippine bishops of 1951.

We will continue to pray for these intentions and by our perseverance in prayer we hope to add to her crown this title of Mediatrix of All–Grace raised to a dogma which will be another gem as it were on the virginal and queenly forehead of our Mother. What glory would redound on us and how many graces and blessings would come down upon the Church and the world!

A Marian Dogma is a rare event in the life of the Church, thus our participation in this Rosary Crusade is the opportunity of a lifetime of a Catholic. By faithfully keeping our promise to pray the rosary to honor Mary Mediatrix, we will be pleasing the Lord Jesus whose design it is to glorify His Mother anew.
We invite you to send this form properly accomplished by Email or postal mail. You may also send it by text message.
We will collect and forward them to Pope Benedict XVI

Confraternity of Mary Mediatrix of All Grace
c/o Rev. Fr. Melvin P. Castro
Bishop's Residence, Tarlac City 2300

THE OFFICAL REPORT ON THE APPARITIONS OF OUR LADY, MARY, MEDIATRIX OF ALL GRACE

Lipa City, Philippines

On Sunday, September 12, 1948, Feast of the Most Holy Name of Mary, at about five o'clock in the afternoon, a Sister who was taking a walk in the garden, suddenly remarked that a vine shook. As there was no wind at all, it attracted her attention. She approached and heard a woman's gentle voice that said:

"Fear not, my child. Kiss the ground. Whatever I shall tell you to do, you must do. For fifteen consecutive days come to visit Me here in this spot. Eat some grass, my child."

The Sister did not see anyone, she only heard the voice.

Next day, Monday, at five o'clock, the Sister returned to the place. She knelt and recited the Hail Mary. She had reached the words "full of grace" when she remarked that the vine was moving. Lo and behold, she saw a Beautiful Lady with her hands clasped on her breast, a golden Rosary hanging on the right hand. She was stooping slightly, her dress was pure white, simple, held at the waist by a narrow cloth belt. Her feet were bare and resting on clouds which were about two feet high from the ground. Her face, of indescribable beauty, was radiant. She was smiling.

"Be faithful to come here, be it rain or sunshine.",

She said to the Sister. Then the Sister asked her, "Beautiful Lady, who are you?"

"I am your Mother, my little one." And having said this, She vanished.

On Tuesday at the same hour, Sister went to the same spot. The Lady was already there waiting for her. Her arms were extended forward as if wishing to enfold her little one in a tender maternal embrace. *"I wish this place to be blessed tomorrow,"*

She said. "At what time, my Mother?" asked the Sister.

"*Any time your Mother Prioress wants. My child, I forbid you to forget the incidents of these fifteen days."* Then blessing the Sister, she disappeared.

The blessing of the nook in the garden was set for three o'clock in the afternoon of the next day. Carmel's Chaplain, His Excellency, Bishop Alfredo Ma. Obviar, wearing the rochette and stole, entered the enclosure and the Community followed him to the spot. As the Community drew near, the Lady, visible only to the Sister, appeared with her arms extended; as if to gather all in Her maternal embrace. As soon as the Sister knelt before Her, She said:

"My child, kiss the ground and eat a little grass. Take a piece of paper and pencil and write down what I shall tell you for the Community."

The following is Her message:

"My daughters: I ask of you to believe in Me and to keep this a deep secret among yourselves for the time being. Love one another as true Sisters. Come often to visit me. Make this a sacred place and respect it. Gather the petals my children. I bless you all."

Then the Lady vanished and in the place of the apparition, there were petals scattered. The Chaplain proceeded with the blessing of the place after which he gave a short talk to the Community emphasizing the Lady's message.

At five o'clock the same day, Sister went to the same place and, as on the preceding days, the Apparition was waiting for her.

"I shall ask something from Carmel. I want a statue of Mine to be placed here. Clean this part of your garden so it will be a real place of prayer. You need not tell Me al your Sisters are asking, for I know them. Tell them that they must believe lest they lose grace. I shall always bless the Community, My child."

On September 16, when Sister reached the spot the Lady in Her usual attitude told her the following:

"I want a statue of Mine to be place here. I want you to describe Me to your Chaplain because I want it to be as you see Me and as big as the statue of Our Lady of Lourdes that is in the cloister. Tell your Mother Prioress to have the rosary recited by the community here every afternoon during these days. Extend My love to

all my daughters. Tell them that I love my daughters in Lipa Carmel; that I shall always be with you all."

Then blessing Her little one, She departed.

The following days, the Lady and the Sister met each other on the spot and She spoke to her as a Mother to Her little one. She gave Her motherly advise telling her to be obedient, simple and humble. Tell the Community that simplicity and humility are the two virtues She loves so much, so to love and practice them.

One day the Apparition asked from the Community an individual consecration of its members to Herself according to the spirit of Saint Louis Mary Grignion de Monfort.

On the last of the fifteen days, Sunday, September 26th, the Lady repeated Her counsel to Her little one:

"My child, you must love and obey your Mother Prioress. Tell your Sisters to love one another as true Sisters, to practice humility and simplicity, the virtues I love most. Tell them to love and obey their Superiors and not to forget the things I ask. I shall not ask bigger things from you as you expect because you are my little ones. Do not forget to consecrate yourselves to me on October 7. Be very good. I AM MARY, MEDIATRIX OF ALL GRACE. I shall always bless the Community morning and evening."

Blessing the Sisters, She disappeared.

On September 30, rose petals were strewn in the cells of the monastery. On October 3, the shower fell on the staircase. Occasional showers within the cloisters followed. On November 11, the petals fell outside and were seen by some visitors.

On Friday, November 12, after Mass, the Sister was called to the place of the Apparition, and there on the vine was Mary, Mediatrix of All Grace. Her hands joined on Her breast in an attitude of prayer, She looked tenderly but sadly on Her little one, and on the Community that had followed. Then She said:

"People believe not my words. Pray my child, pray much because of persecutions. Pray for priests. What I ask here is exactly what I have asked in Fatima. Tell this to the people. They do not believe in Me, nor do they give what I

ask. Tell the Sisters that I ask them to pray and help spread my devotion and to make penances for those who do not believe. When people come to pray and ask for graces, let them ask directly from Me and not through you. These things may now be revealed. This is my last apparition in this sport."

Blessing Her little one and the Community assembled in the sacred place, Mary, Mediatrix of All Grace vanished.

In January 1991, the petal showers began again for Sr. Teresita Castillo. Since the, the petal showers have continued and Our Lady has begun to speak to "Sr. Teresing" and has given her messages. Moreover, she has also had showers - of whole roses!

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Archbishop of Lipa

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